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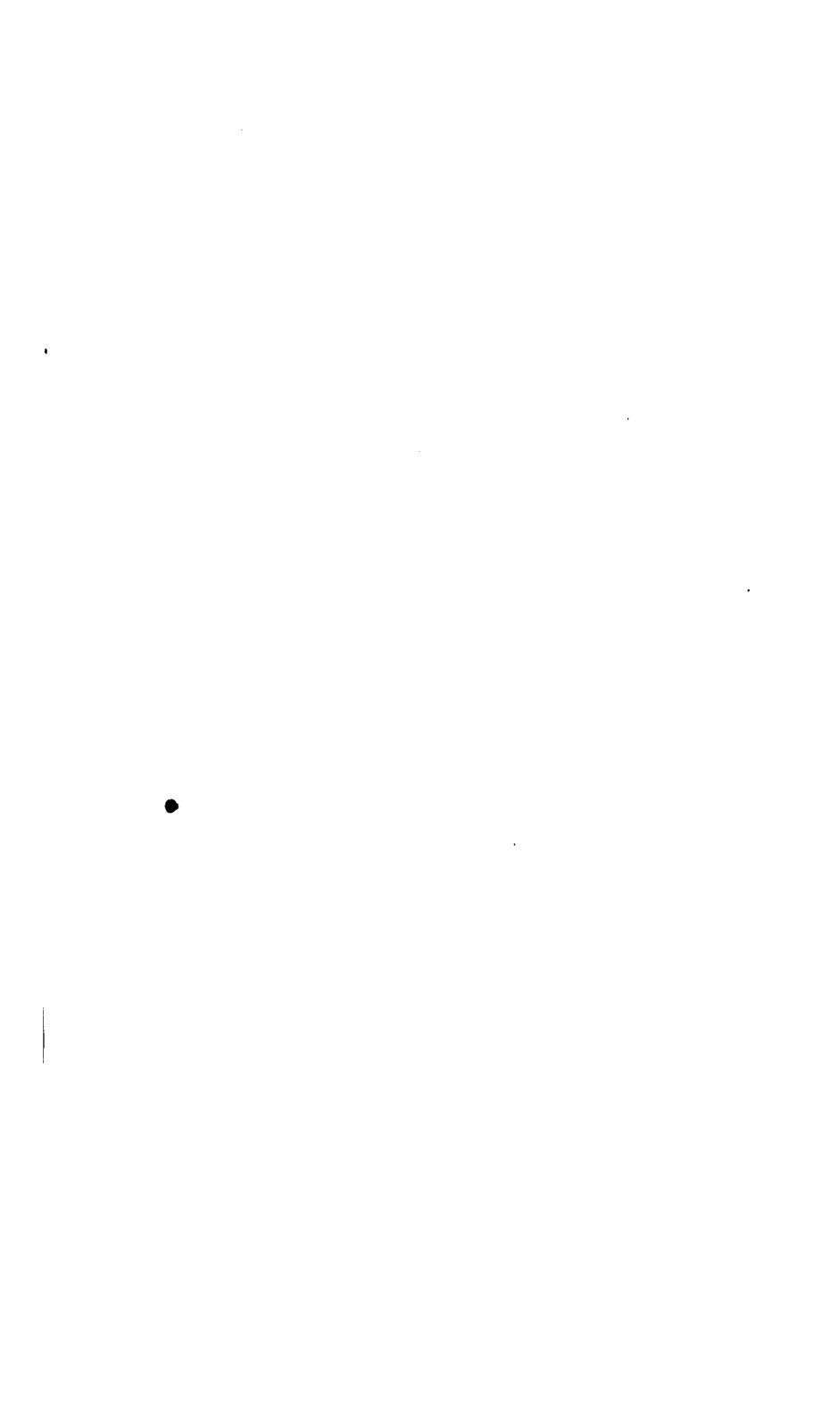
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A
DISSERTATION

ON

Jephthah's Vow:

OCCASIONED BY

Mr. ROMAINE'S late SERMON
on that SUBJECT.

By WILLIAM DODWELL, M. A.
Rector of *Shottesbrook, Berks.*



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THE PREFACE.

THE Christian Religion may seem so little concerned, as to any Article of Faith or Practice, in the Determination of the ensuing Question, that it may be thought scarce to deserve so particular a Discussion as is here offered. And I am so far sensible of the Weight of this Objection, that I judged it more proper for the Subject of a Dissertation than of a Discourse from the Pulpit. However I hope it will not be esteemed a Misapplication of One's Time, to clear up any Passage in the Sacred Writings; and the great Names which I have had Occasion herein to cite, will shew that Men of the best Judgments have thought it a Point worthy of their Attention. That it might not be considered merely as an useless Speculation, I have likewise vindicated the plain Interpretation which I have maintained, from the Objections of Unbelievers, and have pointed out the Uses, which it affords for the practical Improvement of Christians.

Use is indeed the great Point to be considered, and every real Truth has a more immediate or remote Connection with it. A Love of Truth is itself of general Use, and when an Interpretation of any Part of Sacred History is positively advanced as proved, which appears to me contrary to Reason, to Scripture, and the Notions of all primitive Writers, it will be allowed as excusable at least to produce the Evidence on the other Side, and if the Controversy be thought not material, I am not the Author of the Revival of it. Mr. Romaine's Discourse on the Subject, as I have signified, gave Occasion to this Review of the Argument, for when that proved altogether unsatisfactory for obvious Reasons, which the first Reading of that Passage suggested, I had recourse to all the Authors that I knew of, who had considered this Matter. By the References which I have made to these it will appear, that every
real

W. S. S.

THE PREFACE.

real Difficulty which he has proposed in the usual Interpretation had long ago been considered and answered, and that it must be an Error of great Inattention to pronounce so peremptorily that his own Construction "is free from all the Objections to which the common Opinion is exposed." On the Contrary, I should need no other Conviction of the Reality of the Sacrifice than the complicated Absurdities of this new evasive Refuge.

Some Parts of the Argument might have received some Reinforcement from Mr. Hallet's Supplement to Mr. Pierce's Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews, which has fallen into my Hands since the following Dissertation was printed. I have the Pleasure however, to find many of the same Arguments used to confirm the Fact, and some of the same Replies given to the usual Objections, with a particular Vindication of our present Translation in a very material Point; tho' I cannot agree with him in the Method of accounting for it, nor in the severe Censures which he passes on Jephthah.

Many other Authors may have considered this Subject, who have not come to my Knowledge, having the Advantage only of a private Collection of Books, but I have fairly represented and referred to each Writer that I have seen, whether favouring or opposing my own Opinion. The latter, particularly, I have consider'd at large, and have neither weakened their strongest, nor omitted their most inconsiderable Arguments. This indeed has occasioned a greater Length than was at first intended; but if it may have contributed to make the whole Point more clear at once, and prevent the Necessity of any Review, as I am not without Hopes it may, it will the better answer the Purpose, and I shall gladly apply my Thoughts to more useful Subjects.



Jephthah's Vow

PERFORM'D, &c.

THE Subject of *Jephthah's Vow* has been a Point of great Controversy in these latter Ages of the Church. In former Times both *Jews* and *Christians* seem fully agreed upon the Question, which one should imagine should be a strong Presumption in favour of their Interpretation. The Difficulties and Objections started against it are of a late Date, begun by the singular Conceit of some Rabbies, carried on through the Interest and Partiality of the *Romish* Divines, and finally embraced by some great and good Men of our own Communion, who were shocked with the Difficulties represented to them in this Account, and either attended not to the proper Solutions of them, or to the greater Absurdities of the new Construction of this Vow. I shall not despair either of adding some new Light to this

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Subject,

Subject, or of reviewing and representing what has been offered by others, in such a manner as may prove as satisfactory to the Reader, as it has ever appeared to me.

There are only two Opinions in this Point, and therefore every Argument, which tends to disprove the one, is of so much Weight in Confirmation and Support of the other. If neither of them can be entirely freed from Exception, we must rest the Point on this Issue, which is established by the strongest Evidence, and liable to the least Objection, and I shall not fear to trust the Event with every impartial Person. Indeed the one Opinion ~~large~~ pretends to Evidence, but was devised only as a Refuge from the formidable Difficulties, which were supposed to attend the other; whereas I shall retort the Charge, shew the Inconsistency of this new Interpretation, and demonstrate that this cannot be the Sense of it, whether the other can be justified or not.

To proceed to the History. *Jephthab the Gileadite* having been expelled by his Brethren from any Part in his Father's Inheritance, as being *the Son of an Harlot*, fled into the Land of *Tob*, where *vain Men*, says the Text, *were gathered to him, and went out with him*. Becoming thus considerable by their Assistance, and being a *mighty Man of Valour*, he was recalled by the *Israelites* to be their Captain on Occasion of a War with the Children of *Ammon*. After some Expostulations he accepts of their Commission, on Condition of being continued their Head and Governour. In this Capacity he treats with the *Ammonites*, and all Treaty proving ineffectual, prepares to fight against them. And *Jephthab* vowed a Vow unto the Lord, and said, *If thou shalt without fail deliver the Children of Ammon into mine Hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the Doors of my House to meet me, when I return in Peace from the*

the Children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lords, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-offering. I shall not now argue from the first Appearance of the Words, because I am sensible of the Objection, which lies against the Translation. If the Original does certainly signify, as it is here rendred, the Case is plain, and there would be no Room for Doubt: *Whatsoever cometh forth, &c. shall be the Lords, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-offering.* We must first therefore justify the Translation, before we can argue from it.—And the strictest Examination of the Original, if we may credit the best Judges of it, will not only confirm this Sense, but make it more evident and indisputable. For it is not rightly rendred, *Whatsoever cometh forth, &c.* This may mislead the Reader to suppose, that *Jephthah* had some Animal, and not a human Creature in his Thoughts. Whereas it should be, *Whoever cometh forth, &c.* and this determines the Vow to respect some Person of his Family. Thus the LXX. render it. Καὶ ἔσται ὁ προσκυβόμενος, ὃς ἀνέλθῃ, &c. Καὶ ἀνέσται αὐτοῦ θυσία: and thus every Translation, but the *English* has rendred this Passage*. Had we done the same Justice to the Original, the Sense had been more express, *Whoever cometh forth of the Doors of my House, shall surely be the Lords, and I will offer him up for a Burnt-offering.* And as this Version restrains the Vow to some human Creature, it cuts off the Foundation of that Distinction, by which some contend for turning the Partick *and* into *or*, as if he had said, it shall be dedicated to the Lord, if it be a rational Creature, *or* if a Beast fit for Sacrifice, it shall then be offered up for a Burnt-offering. But if he was not speaking, as according to the unani-

* Dr. *Lightfoot* confirms these Translations, and adds, that the *Hebrew* Original will most properly bear it. Sermon on *Judges* xi. 39. Vol. II. P. 1216.

mous Consent of all Translators he was not, of any different Kind of Creatures, but only of one of his own Species, then there was no Room for such an hypothetical Kind of Construction, but the Meaning is express and absolute. *He shall surely be the Lords, and I will offer him up for a Burnt-offering.* It is very material to this Purpose, that the Particle itself here translated *and* is quite omitted in the Roman Edition of the LXX and though Dr. Grabe assigns many Reasons why the *Alexandrian* Copy of this Book of Judges is to be preferred, whose Variations from the other he confirms by Testimonies from the earliest Writers, yet when he comes to this Passage*, he is forced to acknowledge, that St. *Augustin*, though he retains the Particle in one Citation, omits it in another, and it is at least as easy to account for the Insertion in one Place, as the Omission in the other. Accordingly the *Vulgate* follows the *Vatican* Copy, and renders it thus, *Quicumque primus fuerit egressus de Foribus Domus meae, mibique occurrevit revertenti cum Pace a Filiis Ammon, eum Holocaustum offeram Domino.* Nor is this Evidence the less, but the more considerable, because it comes from the *Romish* Church, it being indeed the Testimony of Adversaries against themselves; for as the Papiists are, for a plain Reason, almost unanimous against the Opinion of *Jephthah's* Sacrificing his Daughter, they are very evidently self-condemned in their Interpretation, these Translations being confirmed by Papal Authority, and they under an Anathema prohibited from admitting any other Version. Now the Omission of this Particle would be decisive in the Case, and silence the very Pretence of any different Meaning, even according to the common Translation. *It shall surely be the*

* Epist. ad Millium. P. 21.

Lords: I will offer it up for a Burnt-offering. Human Creatures would plainly be included in the general Term of *Whatsoever*, though it would not have been confined to them alone, as it plainly is by the stricter Version of *Whosoever*, &c.

This I think has not been sufficiently attended to, yet there are other very sufficient Reasons against altering the Translation, and bringing it to a disjunctive Sentence. The Particle ' it is allowed may signify *or*, but it is a rare Signification of it, in no Degree of Comparison so frequent as the other *, and not to be proved, but where the Sense apparently requires it, as it does in the several Instances produced. Accordingly Dr. *Wall* † mentions it as a kind of Discovery in *Tremellius* that it is capable of this Sense, and he was willing to embrace it, if there was a Possibility of admitting it. We might therefore require some strong Reason for varying in this Place from the most usual and fixed Meaning of it, which all agree to be as a Conjunction Copulative. But as it happens farther, there is not only no Ground here for such a Variation, but there is an unanswerable Argument against it. Bishop

* Exponunt disjunctivè, rarissimâ significatione vocis Hebraicæ —fatetur ita exponi posse ut Exod. xxi. 15. neque tamen sequitur debere hoc in Loco, cum et hæc multo rarior, & altera sit aptior Interpretatio, &c. Robinsoni Annal. Mundi Lib. 9. p. 518, 519 —For though the *Hebrew* Letter (') be so taken sometimes, yet very rarely; and so little Reason is it, that it should be so taken here, being most commonly taken conjunctively, as they well know, that have any Understanding in the *Hebrew* Tongue, yea and oft in some one Chapter, as may easily be shewed. As for Example, in *Gen.* xxxii. 1, 2, 3, 4. four or five times it is so taken in 3 or 4 Verses. So in *Gen.* xxxiii. 1, 2. as oft in two Verses; and *Gen.* xlv. 1, 2, 3. As many times it is found to be, and in most Chapters, if not all, throughout the old Testament, this Word (') signifieth *and* conjunctively, not *or* disjunctively. *Rogers* on *Judges*, P. 569, 570.

† *Wall's* Critical Notes. Vol. I. p. 172.

Smalridge has so excellently illustrated this, which indeed had been observed by others before him, that one should not have expected, that a bare Assertion or Observation on the different Senses of this Particle should have been offered to us again, without an Attempt, at least, of some Reply to his Argument. A disjunctive Sense can only be admitted, where two different Kinds of Things are spoken of, or two different Individuals of the same Kind. Where the one is included in the other, it is ridiculous and contrary to all the Rules of Speaking, to make such a Distinction in the Sentence. One of the Ways of dedicating any thing to the Lord was by Sacrifice, and therefore it would be Nonsense to say, *It shall be Holy to the Lord, or I will offer it up for a Burnt-offering*, that is, it shall be Holy, or it shall be Holy. But if we render it, as our Translation very rightly does, *And I will offer it up*, then the Sense is regular and consistent, and a very proper Advance from the general Notion of a Dedication to the Lord, to the particular Method in which it was to be dedicated. Then the Meaning of the Vow was plainly this, that whatsoever should meet him, should be devoted to the Lord, and not only so, but in this peculiar Form, that it should be offered up for a Burnt-offering. Bishop *Smalridge* goes on thus to confirm this Observation*. “ It
“ may very properly be said, that *He who curseth*
“ *his Father or his Mother, shall surely be put to*
“ *Death*; but it could with no Propriety of Speech
“ be said, that he who curseth his Parent *or his*
“ *Mother*, shall surely be put to Death: For since
“ Parent is a general Word, which includes in it
“ both Father or Mother, it is very incongruous to
“ mention either Father or Mother as distinct from
“ the Parent, both which are contained under the

* *Smalridge's Sermons.* P. 223.

“ Appellation of Parent. So here since *to be the*
 “ *Lords*, or *to be consecrated to the Lord*, is a
 “ general Word, which includes in it Sacrifices, all
 “ which undoubtedly were the Lords, and were
 “ consecrated to the Lord, we cannot imagine that
 “ *Jephthah* should make such an absurd Vow as this,
 “ that whatsoever he should meet, he would either
 “ consecrate it to the Lord, or he would offer it as
 “ a Victim to the Lord; that is, in other Words,
 “ either it should be the Lords, or it should be the
 “ Lords.” Other Authors represent it thus*.
 Would there be any Sense in saying, I will offer up
 a clean Animal, *or* an Ox? and again, This is
 either a Man, *or* it is *Peter*?—The Cases are pa-
 rallel, and the Absurdity very plain in each. An
 Ox is a clean Animal; *Peter* is a Man; and a
 Burnt-offering is holy unto the Lord. These are
 all only different Species of the General-kind, Sub-
 divisions only, not distinct from, but included in
 the first Part of the Sentence, and therefore evidently
 absurd to be used as disjunctive from the other.
 Unless then we would charge such Improperities on
 the Sacred Writings, as we would reject with In-
 dignation in any other, there can be no Pretence
 for making these disjunctive Sentences, in this Vow;
 but the Sense plainly is, what at first Sight it appears
 to be, that the first Person who came to meet him
 on his Return, should be dedicated to the Lord,
 and in this determinate Form, should be offered up
 in Sacrifice.

But we are shocked already. Did *Jephthah* then
 from the Beginning intend a human Sacrifice? Cer-
 tainly no less. The usual Exclamations against this
 Supposition, as far as they are argumentative, shall
 be considered hereafter. At present let us examine

* *Bouffrer. & Serarius in Loc.*

the Circumstances of his Situation, and the Expressions of his Vow, and judge what else could be intended.

If we admit the forementioned Version of the LXX (and I do not find that any of those, who argue against the Supposition of *Jephthab's* sacrificing his Daughter, deny that it may be so rendred) that *Whosoever cometh forth, &c. shall be the Lords, and I will offer him up for a Burnt-offering*, then the Case is plain, and a human Sacrifice was not only intended, and but expressed: Animals were excluded out of the Vow according to this Version, and it related immediately to some Person of the Family*.—But take it according to our Translation, *Whatsoever cometh forth, &c.* and see the Consequence. Now what could *Jephthab* expect to meet him first at his Return? The Fame of his Victory, if he succeeded, as he did, would soon fly home. It was natural to suppose, that some of his Domesticks would be forward to meet their Master with their Congratulations, and to conduct him to his Habitation with Acclamations and Triumph. These might reasonably be expected to come out on purpose on this Design, whereas it must be by great Accident, if any Animal first met him on the Way. If he returned victorious, his Return could not be in Privacy and Silence, so much as to give an Opportunity for his lighting first on any other Creature. It would have been an unpardonable Neglect in those of his own Household, not to have joined in the publick Joy, nor to have congratulated the happy Instrument of the publick

* Nec ait *Quodcunque* exierit, &c. offeram illud Holocaustoma; sed ait *Quicumque* exierit, offeram eum: ubi procul dubio nihil aliud quam hominem cogitavit. *Augustin Quæst. in Jud. Lib. 7.*

Welfare, whom they stood so nearly related to. 'Tis plain, that *Jephthab* did expect it from the very Words of his Vow. *If thou shalt without fail deliver the Children of Ammon into my Hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the Doors of my House to meet me, when I return in Peace, shall surely be the Lords, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-offering.* He does not say, Whatsoever he should first set his Eyes on at his Return, but *Whatsoever should come forth of the Doors of his House to meet him* on his Return in Peace. The Expression is very strong and plain, and implies a voluntary Design of Congratulation on so happy an Occasion. Now could any Animal know of his Success and victorious Return in Triumph, and come out to meet him on this joyful Solemnity? Do not the Words evidently signify a *Design* of meeting him on this triumphant Occasion, and could this be applicable to any of the brute Part of the Creation?

But to forbear pressing farther so gross an Absurdity, suppose that Animals might have been included in the Vow, yet what sort of these could *Jephthab* expect to come forth of the Doors of his House, which he could offer up for a Burnt-offering? Domestick Animals are few, and we can scarce frame a Supposition of any that could come forth of his House, which could be fit for Sacrifice. The Question has often been put on the other Side*, as a Difficulty in the received Interpretation, what if a Dog had first come forth to meet him? This has been urged to prove, that he had not determined by his Vow to offer up a Burnt-offering, but that it must admit of the disjunctive Sense beforementioned: Whereas, this is indeed a Proof, that Animals were not intended in this Vow at all. Of

* *Grotius, &c.*

these none could really be more likely to meet him than a Dog. Yet this could no more be holy in any other Way, than in that of a Sacrifice. It could not itself be offered up : As an unclean Beast it was prohibited. And though some of these might be dedicated, and being redeemed, might in the Value of them be applied to religious Uses, yet this Creature was particularly excepted. *Deut. xxvii. 18. Thou shalt not bring the Price of a Dog into the House of the Lord thy God for any Vow.* Admitting therefore, that the Vow had been disjunctive, it could not possibly in this Case have been fulfilled in any Sense. It must not have been offered : It must not have been redeemed. This is a greater Objection to the new than to the old Interpretation of this Vow, for upon this Supposition *Jephthah* must have been absolutely involved in an inextricable Difficulty.—Mr. *Romaine** has given us a general State of the Case, and told us what was to be done in every other Instance, but has omitted this Circumstance, which lay strongest against it, and which yet was almost the only supposable Case to those, who exclude human Persons out of the Question. One can scarce conceive, that any other Creature than a Dog should come to meet him out of his own House : Dr. *Jenkins*, who was inclined to the other Opinion, against the Notion of a real Sacrifice, seems to have been aware of this, and has therefore offered a Remark peculiar to himself†, by which the Force of this Argument might be evaded. And first he observes, that the Word translated *Door* signifies also a *Gate*. Be it so. But I see not what will be gained by this Observation, for there will not be less Force in the Argument, though there may be somewhat

* P. 13, 14. † *Jenkin's* Reasonableness of the Christian Religion. Vol. II. P. 335.

less Propriety in the Expression, if it be translated, *Whatsoever cometh forth of the Gates of my House, &c. shall surely be the Lords, &c.*—But he adds, that “House likewise is not to be taken strictly, but in “a Sense including the Precincts or Places adjoining;” and some Passages of Scripture are then produced, where *House* signifies the whole of the Accommodations and Appendages to the Habitation, or what in plain *English* we call the Homestead. And thus having enlarged the Extent of the Phrase, some Cattle fit for Sacrifice might be found forthcoming from some Place or other belonging to *Jephtab*’s Family. — But now without disputing either of these Remarks separately, the Fallacy lies in the Separation of them. Though a *Door* may signify a *Gate*, and a *House* may signify all the Conveniencies adjacent to the Dwelling, yet when they are spoken of jointly, they cannot possibly bear such a Signification. No parallel Passages can be brought, where both are used, to justify such a Sense, but many may be brought against it, where *the Doors of the House* must and can signify only the Entrance into the Dwelling-house. It is apparently a strained Evasion, for the Expression is full and particular, as if intended to prevent Misapprehension; and had *Jephtab* designed to have spoke of his rational Domesticks, he could not have done it by a more remarkable Phrase. *Ὅς ἐκ τῶν θύρων τοῦ οἴκου μου, &c.* The Words are plain without a Comment, and none is sufficient to persuade us contrary to the obvious Meaning of the Terms, and the constant Use of them, that by the Doors of his House, he meant the Gate of his Farm-yard.—It really adds to the Force of the Argument, and Confirmation of the first Appearance of its Meaning, when we see the Weakness of the Evasion offered by such great Men, who, if any, had been capable of defending their Point.

But

But suppose farther, in Opposition to every Circumstance yet mentioned, that *Jephthab's* Vow might have had Relation to some Animal, yet how unsuitable on this Supposition must have been the Value of his Offering to the Degree of the Blessing, on Occasion of which it was to be offered? The Children of *Israel* were now in all Appearance in great Danger, both from the Number and military Skill of their Enemies; and they were so sensible of it, that they thought proper to submit their private Misunderstandings to the Consideration of the publick Danger, and to have Recourse to a Person, whom themselves had used ill before, rather than trust their common Interests to one of less Experience and Valour. He enters on the Office with the like Apprehension, endeavours by a candid and proper Message to compose the Difference, and prevent the uncertain Hazards of War; and failing in that Endeavour, makes a Vow, extraordinary we should imagine, suited to the Exigence of the Occasion, and the Importance of the Blessing he was to implore, no less than the Preservation of the whole Nation. Could he propose a single Beast on such an Occasion? "Grant me Success, O Lord, in this great Undertaking; give Victory to thy People *Israel*, and in such Case, I will upon my Return offer up a Sheep or an Ox." Who sees not, that if this had been the Import of his Vow, it had fallen much short of a proper Testimony of his Gratitude, and of the Greatness of the Event depending? Had he devoted a Hecatomb, or a whole Herd of Cattle at his Return, it had sounded somewhat proportionable to the Favour and Blessing petitioned; but as the Thing devoted was plainly a single Creature, it had been much beneath the Exigence of the Case, and the accustomed Value of Vows; for they offered much greater Thanks-offerings

ings upon much less Occasions. To add Weight to this Remark, *Peter Martyr* * observes from St. *Ambrose*, that *Jephthah* made this Vow not before, but in the Heat of the Battle, when he was hard pressed by the *Ammonites*, and when he must be presumed to vow something of the greatest Consequence. If it be said that St. *Ambrose* had no Authority for this Observation, it may be answered, that this is taking a Point for granted which cannot be proved. There might be a Tradition in the Case which might have come down to his Time, tho' he only has expressly mention'd it, and which might have been lost to us if he had not recorded it. It is a Circumstance highly probable in itself, and at least no Way contradicted by the Scripture Account. It seems rather implied, as it is introduced in the History, being mentioned just after his speedy Progress thro' *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, and *Mizpeh* of *Gilead*, and just before his compleat Victory over the *Ammonites*. Now if this was the Case, if his Apprehensions were raised with the immediate Danger †, 'tis less Wonder if he was not so considerate as he should, and would otherwise have been in the Subject-Matter of his Vow, but was only eager to propose something which seem'd to him of the highest Importance. However, without the Advantage of this Supposition, if the Vow was made before the Engagement, yet even then, that he could vow one Animal for an Offering in Return for a national Blessing, is very unsuitable to the Reason of the Thing, and the Notions and Practices of

* *Ambrosius* scribit *Jephtham* vovisse, non ante pugnam, sed in acie, in ipso conflictu, & rebus ambiguis. *Pet. Mart. Loc. Com. p. 411.*

† Is eventu belli conflictatus ambiguo, præliorumq; veritus incerta, votum vovit hujusmodi, &c. *Ambrosius de Virg. Lib. III. P. 428.*

the *Jews*. But now, suppose that he really intended a human Sacrifice, and whatever other Objections may be thought to lie against this Supposition, yet this Difficulty is at an End. This was a Sacrifice of high Value and Dignity, and such at least in this Respect, as one might suppose a Person in the greatest Distress, and under the highest Apprehension of Danger, to have vowed on the Occasion.

But was it not easy for *Jephthah* to have foreseen, that this Vow might probably fall on his Daughter? Was not she, who was the most nearly interested in his Preservation and Success, the most likely to be the first of his Family who should come forth to meet him, and congratulate him on his Return? So we judge, and the Event seems to confirm our Judgment. And yet perhaps this was not so probable as we are now apt to think. It might not then be so customary for the Virgin-Daughters of *Israel* to appear in publick, tho' she might well think so extraordinary an Occasion might justify her, and an over-eager Desire of seeing her Father in Triumph might betray her into an unusual Step. Certainly she would not have done it alone, and she was so lately return'd from the Land of *Tob*, that it might not have been expected that she should as yet have been so honoured by the Daughters of the Land, as to be attended by them, and to grace the Solemnity with their Presence. Yet the Text plainly represents her as thus attended, *coming out to meet her Father with Timbrels and with Dances*, and in the 37th Verse, she expressly makes mention of these her Virgin-Fellows. This is mentioned only as a Conjecture, as a possible Reason at least, why *Jephthah* might not expect to meet his Daughter first at his Return; for it has justly been thought a Difficulty, that he should make such a Vow concerning the first Person, whom he should meet at his Return

turn without thinking of her, or that he should designedly engage to fulfil such a Vow if he did think of her: I pretend not to clear *Jephthab* from the Imputation of great Rashness in this Particular, but am observing only, that on Account of her Sex, 'tis possible he might not expect her on the Road to meet him. The last cited Author plainly confirms this Supposition, by rendering thus the Words of *Jephthab's* Lamentation, * *Hæu me Filia mea decepisti me*, &c. and the vulgate *Latin* follows this Translation. Bishop *Smalridge* seemed to incline to the Opinion of his really thinking of his Daughter at that Time, and devoting her as the nearest and dearest Person to him in the World, in Hopes of Success, and accordingly has put Words in his Mouth to that Effect †. And if we suppose with St. *Ambrose*, that this Vow was made in the Hurry of the Engagement, when he was almost driven to Extremity, this will take off much of our Surprise at a Vow of this Nature. His Life, nay more, his Reputation was at stake, and not that only, but the Success of the People who had made him their Commander; and as the present Distress always seems the greatest, any Thing he might think was to be vowed to deliver him from that. This is so usual with many People in great Emergencies, and the Notion of the Efficacy of Vows to render the Deity propitious, was so prevalent amongst the *Jews*, that it will much abate our Amazement, if we put the Supposition at the worst Disadvantage, that he actually thought of his Daughter at the Time. Yet upon the Whole, I think it seems more probable, that she was out of his Thoughts or Expectations at least, when he vow'd his Vow. The Confusion and Horror that he expresses on the Sight of his

* *Ambrosius de Officiis*. Lib. III. Cap. 12. Vol. II. P. 38.

† Sermon xxii. P. 228.

Daughter,

Daughter, seem plainly to shew, that this was the first Time that he thought of his Vow reaching her. But to proceed now to the Circumstances of the History, which, whether he originally intended to sacrifice his Daughter or not, will plainly prove, that in the Event he did do it.

It pleased God, the Scripture tells us, to prosper his Prayers, and to give him an entire Victory over these Enemies of his Country. This Account is thus related by the sacred Historian, in few emphatical Words immediately following the Relation of the Vow. *So Jephthah passed over unto the Children of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his Hands. And he smote them from Aroer, even until thou come to Minnith, even twenty Cities, and unto the Plain of the Vineyards, with a very great Slaughter. Thus the Children of Ammon were subdued before the Children of Israel.* Upon this happy Conclusion of his Labours, and compleat Victory over his Enemies, he prepares to return Home in Triumph, when an unforeseen Accident alters the Scene, and turns all his Joy and Satisfaction to Lamentation, and Mourning, and Woe. *And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his House, and behold his Daughter came out to meet him with Timbrels and with Dances*; intending doubtless to congratulate his safe Return, and Country's Triumph in the Employment of him: And then the Historian to aggravate the ensuing Distress, very pertinently adds, *and she was his only Child; beside her he had neither Son nor Daughter.* At the Sight of this his only begotten Child, he rents his Heart as well as his Garments, puts on the usual Gesture of Mourning; and breaks out into the most passionate Exclamations of Sorrow. *And it came to pass, when he saw her, he rent his Cloaths, and said, Alas my Daughter, thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one*

of them that trouble me ; for I have opened my Mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. The Tidings were too heavy to be communicated at once : He intimates only a Grief too big for Utterance, and there is much of Art and more of Nature, in thus preparing her to hear of her unhappy Fate. Could any one now who had read before the Words of the Vow, have the least Doubt of the Meaning and Issue of it, when he sees it work that Effect, which he must suppose it would work in a Father, upon finding it, by the Accident of her first coming out, determined to his Daughter ? We read the Sentiments of *Jephtab* himself in the Bitterness of his Soul, in that overflowing Sorrow which manifested itself in his Behaviour and Expression. If he by his Rashness had brought himself to a Necessity, at least as he thought, of sacrificing his own Daughter, his Conduct and Language are suitable to what we should expect on such an Occasion. There is a Severity in them equal to the Pungency of such Affliction, as he must feel in such a Situation ; and if we review the Expressions of this his first Address to her, it will extort Pity and Compassion to him as well as to his more innocent, but scarce more unhappy Daughter. *He rent his Cloaths, and said, Alas, my Daughter, thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me ; for I have opened my Mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.* We see him labouring under the greatest Distress ; his Vow he thought was indispensable ; the Violation of it was not to be thought of, and yet the Performance of it would end in the Destruction of his own, his only Child, the proposed Comfort of his Age, and Support of his Family. If he really meant a Sacrifice, he could not indeed say less, nor could he well say more ; but the whole Account is suitable and consistent. But if, accord-

ing to the other Supposition, he meant only to dedicate her to perpetual Virginity, the Cause of all this extraordinary Grief and Distress is unaccountable, and a single State made much more lamentable, than either Reason or Revelation will warrant us to esteem it. We want not to be informed of the particular Notions which the *Jews* had in this Point, of the Fondness which they had for Posterity, of their Interpretation of those Words, *Be fruitful and multiply*, &c. as a Precept as well as a Blessing, and of the Hopes which each particular Family entertained of producing the Messiah. I shall make Use of this well known Observation hereafter, against the Supposition it is brought to favour. At present I am observing, that the Notion of her being confined from all Conversation with Mankind, besides its being absolutely unsupported, falls greatly short of the extraordinary Distress here expressed, and may be urged as such, both to those who are Advocates for, and those who are Enemies to Recluses and a Monastick State. It is most inconsistent indeed in the former, who, whilst they magnify the superior Privileges of this State, make *Jephtah* mourn so immoderately for her being devoted to a Condition which they apprehend to be more sanctified and glorious. Nor is this extravagant Sorrow expressed with so much Vehemence and Bitterness, to be reconciled to the Occasion only of her continuing to live in a single State, even by those who justly disapprove of such a State. To see *Jephtah* after a national Victory, in the Glories accruing to himself, and the Blessings thereupon attending his People, to see him in the midst of all this Triumph, renouncing at once all Share in the publick Joy, renting his Cloaths, and crying out to his Daughter with deep Lamentation, that she *had brought him very low, and was one of them that troubled him*; for that

that his Vow was indispenfable, and all this only becaufe ſhe was now to continue a Virgin ; is ſo amazing an Interpretation, that if ſome of the Difficulties attending the other Suppoſition made them look out for this, one would have thought the ſuperior Difficulties of this ſhould have brought them back again to the old and uſual Conſtruction.

But *Jephthah* loſt hereby the Hopes of Deſcendants, which was the Occaſion of his Concern.— 'Tis true, this was one aggravating Circumſtance in the Loſs of his Daughter, but whether in itſelf alone equal to that unbounded Grief which *Jephthah* expreſſed, we may leave any one to judge. It was very proper indeed for the Hiſtorian to take Notice of this additional Cauſe of Grief, which occaſioned his mentioning this Circumſtance, otherwiſe theſe new Expoſitors had wanted the very Handle of this their Conſtruction of his Vow. *Jephthah's* Daughter herſelf ſeemed apprehenſive, upon this firſt Intimation, of a ſeverer Fate, which however ſhe received with all Piety and dutiful Submiſſion. She deſires her Father not to diſturb himſelf ſo ſeverely on her Account, but to attend rather to the publick Joy than to her private Miſfortune ; for that ſhe was ready to ſubmit to any Calamity which this might accidentally have brought upon her, ſince he by God's Bleſſing had been the glorious Inſtrument of ſuch Advantages to his Country. *And ſhe ſaid unto him, My Father, if thou haſt opened thy Mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy Mouth ; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken Vengeance for thee of thine Enemies, even of the Children of Ammon. Do to me according, &c.* This ſeems expreſſive of ſome Violence which ſhe apprehended was implied in his Vow. She does not ſay, diſpoſe of me according to your Vow, which might have admitted of either

Sense, but *Do to me*, which implies some active Force to be offered to her. Πάσαι μοι δι τούτων ἔχοντες ἐν φόβῳ σὺ. As much as we at this Time are astonished at the Nature of this Vow, she too well knew that such were then in Use; and as Fear usually supposes the worst, it is probable that she guessed at once, from her Father's doubtful Expressions, and the extraordinary Concern with which they were delivered, the real Truth of the Case, and her own approaching Fate. However, whatever it might be, she resigns herself to it with great Alacrity; which ready Consent, however it might add to his Affliction in one Respect, to deal so hardly with so dutiful a Child, yet in another, it might render the Discharge of his Vow the less criminal *. And here the Account of the Historian is so concise, that the particular Manner in which he opened to her the full Purport of his Vow, is not recorded. What was the real Event, however strongly it may be inferred by Consequences to us, yet did not certainly appear from this first Sentence to her. He certainly explained himself more fully to her in his next Speech, after which follows her Reply, which is particularly distinguished, as not being a Continuation of her first Answer, but as a new one, by the Historians inserting again particularly, after the Conclusion of the other, *And she said unto her Father*. Now that she was informed in the full Meaning of his Vow, she makes one only Request, that the Execution of it might be respite^d for two

* If that Maxim of the Moralists is true, that no Wrong can be done to Persons who are willing to suffer the supposed Wrong, the slaying of *Jephthah's* Daughter being not an Act of mere Force or arbitrary Power, inflicted on her against her Will, but done with her Consent, and at her Entreaty, so as to become her own free Choice, will for that Reason be attended with less Injustice and Barbarity. *Smalridge's Sermon* xxii. P. 227.

Months, and that she might have Liberty to go with her Companions and bewail her Virginity: Which Request was readily granted by her Father, and made Use of to the Purpose proposed by herself. *And she said unto her Father, Let this Thing be done for me; let me alone two Months, that I may go up and down upon the Mountains, and bewail my Virginity, I and my Fellows. And he said, Go. And she went with her Companions, and bewailed her Virginity upon the Mountains.* This is the Passage which has given a Handle to some to expound the Vow of devoting her only to perpetual Virginity, and which Dr. Wells says is so plain an Indication of the Purport of *Jephthab's* Vow, that it seems strange to him, that any judicious Persons could understand it of his vowing to sacrifice her as a Burnt-Offering *. It seems as strange to me, that any judicious Person could understand it otherwise, when the Vow positively expresses and confines it to that Sense, as I have already shewn, when there are unanswerable Reasons against understanding it of a Vow of Celibacy, as I shall shew hereafter; and when this was nothing more than a Circumstance highly proper to be mentioned both by *Jephthab's* Daughter, and by the Author of the History, even according to the usual Interpretation of it. We had been told before, that she was her Father's only Child, but it did not yet appear, but that she might have been the Instrument of perpetuating his Family, before she was thus unfortunately taken out of the World. Now we are told, that she was yet unmarried, and doomed to die so, which was esteemed a Sort of Curse amongst them, and that this was the Circumstance which particularly affected her, and for which she requested a short Respite,

* Wells's Paraphrase and Annot. on the Book of *Judges*, p. 56
C 3 for

for a joint Lamentation with her Companions. She had very readily resigned herself, and her own personal Security, to her Father's Honour and Engagement upon the first mention of his Vow, and had she but lived to have continued his Family, she could have born her Lot with more Satisfaction, if she had left such Pledges of her Duty behind her, to continue all the Privileges and Hopes, which amongst them attended the Pleasure of having Offspring. Her Life she could contentedly give up, on an Occasion so glorious to her Father and Family; but the Thought of his Family being extinct in her, added Weight to the Misfortune, and deserved, she thought, a particular Condolence. This is an obvious and a strong Reason, why she proposed to make *this* the Subject of her Lamentation, and not her own unhappy End, which she had before resignedly given her Consent to. There had been somewhat of Inconsistency in her first ready Resignation of herself, and her after-Request of a solemn Term of two Months to bewail her Case, if both had related precisely to the same Thing; but having freely engaged to submit even to Blood to the Execution of his Vow, there was a decent Propriety in desiring Time to lament that Circumstance most, which was most lamented by Persons of her Sex and Nation, and that *the Virgins, which were her Fellows, might bear her Company* in this Lamentation. This was too extraordinary a Circumstance to be omitted in the Account, even tho' it was not the main Point in which the Vow consisted; it was such apparently as was proper to be recorded, tho' her Fate was of a severer Kind, than only a Dedication to perpetual Virginity.

For it follows, *And it came to pass at the End of two Months that she returned to her Father, who did with her according to his Vow which he had vowed.*

The

The Vow itself had been expressed in so plain Terms before, that it was unnecessary to repeat it here again; it was sufficient only to assure us, that *Jephthah* fulfilled his Vow, and there seemed to be no Danger of one's misapprehending the Meaning of it. He had vowed to devote the first Thing, or rather Person that he met, to the Lord, and in this particular Manner, that he would offer it up unto the Lord as a Burnt-Offering. The disjunctive Sense of the Vow has been disproved from the Rules of Grammar, and of Common Sense, and no Attempt of any Reply has been offered. He vowed to dedicate and offer up in Sacrifice the first Object he met,—He met with his Daughter, and did with her according to his Vow. Is there any Difficulty now in the Expression, or Room to doubt of the Event? Certainly none can arise from the Words here used, whatever may be started from other supposed Objections. It is added, *And she knew no Man*, which some have unaccountably laid much Stress upon, as denoting her Dedication to a State of Celibacy. But the Words say no such Thing, nor indeed do they in themselves prove any Thing either Way. The plain Meaning is, that she was a Virgin, but whether she then died such, or continued to live in that State, does not appear at all from the Phrase itself, but must be determined by the Circumstances and Context, and to them we may securely appeal. --But why then was this Observation added here? It was superfluous, it is said, unless it was to determine the Meaning of the Vow. By no Means. It was an honourable Testimony by the inspired Historian to her real Virtue. Her Pretence of desiring two Months Respite and Liberty was, that she might bewail her Virginity: By this it appears, that it was not a Pretence only, that she did not misapply the Time, but that when she was sacrificed,

ficed, she was as innocent in this Respect, as dutiful in her ready Submission to her Father: Who hereby lost all Hopes of Posterity, and had this Cause of Concern added to the Loss of an affectionate and obedient Daughter.

And it was a Custom in Israel, that the Daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the Daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four Days in a Year. Thus we translate it, and thus the Sept. render it. Συνεπορεύοντο αἱ θυγατέρες Ἰσραὴλ θρηνεῖν τὴν θυγατέρα Ἰεφθαῖ, &c. It is allowed, that the Word here translated to *lament* may signify to *discourse* or *confer*. Mr. Romaine adds*, that it signifies to *make Presents*, which because it made most to his Purpose, he prudently chose to insist on, and offers a parallel Place, where it is thus used. But the Instance produced from *Psal.* lxxiii. 18. will not come up to the Proof designed; the Noun which in that Place signifies *Presents* (מתנות) being, as I am assured, by the best Lexicographers, derived not from רתנה (the Word used in the Story of *Jephthah*) but from נתן.

Mr. Leigh indeed specifies one Passage, *Hof.* viii. 10. wherein it is used of *biring by Reward*, but observes † that in the Conjugation *Pibei* it changes its Sense, and signifies either to *lament* or to *discourse*. These are the only Senses of the Word, which have hitherto stood in Competition; and since it will confessedly admit of either, we must enquire which of them may most properly be used here. And yet even this Point will not absolutely determine the Question, since Persons of different Opinions have accommodated each Meaning to their own Interpretation. The Author last mentioned, who was against the Notion of a real Sacrifice, observes, that even if we allow the Translation of *lamenting* her,

* Romaine's Sermon. P. 16. † Leigh's *Critica Sacra*. P. 270.

yet this would not prove, that she was actually offered up, since the Daughters of *Israel* might meet four Days in a Year to lament her Case, on Supposition that she was debarred all Society with Mankind. His Words are, * “ They might lament her yearly, she being alive, because she “ lived such a solitary Life.” Whether this could be sufficient Occasion for such an annual national Lamentation, any more than for her Father’s abandoning himself to Sorrow in the Manner represented; whether the Daughters of *Israel* could be supposed to meet together four Days in a Year, solemnly to mourn the Fate of *Jephtah*’s Daughter, only because she was not given in Marriage, we may appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, and to all the Causes of Anniversary Lamentations recorded in History Sacred or Prophane.--On the other Side, if we allow the Word to be translated of *discourfing* or *conferring*, yet this will not in the least overthrow the usual Construction of this Vow. For it is not necessary to understand it of *discourfing with* her, but of *her*. This is acknowledged not only as consistent with the Phrase, but as the better Construction, even by *Grotius* himself†, though he likewise argues zealously against the Opinion of her being offered up.—Now if we admit this Construction of their meeting to discourse concerning the Daughter of *Jephtah*, this is not only consistent with the Notion of her being a Sacrifice, but necessarily implied in their coming together to commemorate it. They talked over her unhappy Fate, repeated the Circumstances of her calamitous End,

* Ibid. † Alii, *consolentur* Filiam *Jephtæ*, sed verius Chaldeam esse Vocem *תננו* quæ differere significat & ל quod sequitur pro *de* positum ut sæpe. Sensus est, in memoriam victoriæ servatæque Deo fidei, quater anno ad eum locum venisse virgines, & colloquio aut etiam carminibus rem celebrasse. *Grotius* in Loc, which

which must of Course be attended with Lamentations, whether this particular Word was expressive of it or not. This must be the very Design of such an anniversary Appointment, to confer together on the melancholy Occasion of it ; so that either Sense of the Phrase will amount to the same thing.

But there are still farther very convincing Arguments against understanding it of their meeting to converse with the Daughter of *Jephthah*, even if the Original was capable of that Sense. Had this been the Meaning of it, there had been little Occasion for that solemn Lamentation, which was allowed her with her Companions for two Months before, if they had been to see her again for four Days every Year as long as she lived. Her Father might then have put his Vow immediately in Execution, if such a Privilege had been received ; and such a Privilege, by the way, would much have lessened the supposed Affliction of her Condition. But does not every one see, on the first Representation of the Case, that the Design of her Request of a Respite for two Months, was to take a last Farewel of her Friends and Companions, and to partake of their Condolence, as Persons usually desire to do, before they leave the World ? Had she lived, and expected so considerable an annual Visit from them, this Circumstance had been unaccountable both in the Request and the Allowance of it, both which were very natural and proper, if considered as preparatory to her real Destruction.—Nor is it to be omitted, that there is no farther Account or Notice taken of her in this Book ; which might well have been expected on Occasion of her Death, whenever it had happened, after she had by this Accident become so considerable, and had had such national Honours and publick Condolences paid to her. The End of Persons of much less Consequence is usually specified ; but the Truth is, her Misfortune was

was her final End, and therefore the Historian had no Occasion to resume the Mention of her.—At least one may argue much more strongly from the Silence of the Scripture against her surviving this Period, than others have done against her being sacrificed at it, because it is not said in so many Words; though the first Promise of the Vow, and the positive Account of its being fulfilled, compared together, do expressly assert it.

Again, had these annual Visits been paid to her whilst living, they would have ceased of course at her Death. Their Design had then been fulfilled, and had the Daughters of *Israel* met together to confer with, and comfort, or to make Presents to the Daughter of *Jephthah*, there must have been an End of their Meeting, when she was no longer capable of their Gifts or Consolation. If we have therefore any Evidence of the Continuance of this Custom in After-times, this will be a strong Proof, that the original Intent of it, was not any way to comfort her in her Life, but to commemorate her tragical Death. Now to this Purpose, that Testimony of *Epiphanius* * is very considerable, wherein he makes mention of this Observation continued down to his Time, though with many Superstitions and idolatrous Ceremonies. The ingenious Dr. *Brown* in his *Vulgar Errors*, and the learned *Grotius* in his Comments on this History just now cited, have both unaccountably referred to this very Passage, tho' nothing could more strongly make against their Opinions. The Corruptions which *Epiphanius* observes, had been introduced by this Custom, were not to be wondered at, but were such as had usually

* Ἐν γὰρ Σικιμοῖς ταῦτέστιν ἐν τῇ νυνὶ Νεαπόλει. θυσίας οἱ ἐπιχωριοὶ τε-
λῶσιν εἰς ὄνομα τῆς Κόρης, ὅθεν ἐκ ἀποφάσεως τῆς θυγατρὸς Ἰεφθά, τῆς
πολέ προσερχομένης τῷ Θεῷ εἰς θυσίας· καὶ τῆς ὑπαλημένοισι τῷ ὄνοματι
εἰς Βλαβὴν εἰδωλολατρίας καὶ κενολατρίας. *Epiphanius adv. Hæres.*
Lib. iii. Vol. I. P. 1055.

arisen by Degrees from such Commemorations, however intended at first ; but the Custom itself of continuing this Commemoration in any manner, is the material Point here to be noted. This was likely to be carried on for many Ages, if it was begun on Occasion of her unhappy Destruction by Sacrifice, but would have sunk of itself at her Decease, if intended only for some Alleviation of her Affliction in a reclusive Life. If she was really sacrificed, the Design of this Meeting must be supposed to continue the Remembrance of the Fact to latest Posterity, of her unhappy Fate, and ready Submission to it ; and that we find any Notice of such a Custom prevailing so long after, however corrupted, is a strong Confirmation of the Reality of such an original Design, and that it commenced indeed upon the singular and violent Manner of her Death. Her personal Consolation, if intended by this Meeting, had ended with herself, nor had the supposed Circumstance of her living single been a Thing of such Consequence as to be commemorated in any such Manner for so many Ages.

But now, according to the usual Interpretation, this Circumstance of their annual Lamentation is easy to be accounted for. It was the least Return they could make for the Benefits which the Nation had received from her Father, which had in the Event brought this unhappy Catastrophe upon her. A Daughter offered up in Sacrifice in pursuance of a Vow, which was offered up for the Prosperity of the People, was an Event, which that People seemed bound in Gratitude to commemorate, and no Method apparently could be more proper, than that which was here appointed. This is likewise an additional Reason, why that Circumstance was added beforementioned, of her *knowing no Man*. As she died a Virgin, and left no Family to continue her
 Father's

Father's Name and Actions, and her own Misfortune, it was the more requisite that some such Institution should be observed to perpetuate both, and therefore this Custom is mentioned immediately after that Circumstance, as a necessary Consequence of it. If this Reason be thought as strongly applicable to her living as to her dying a Virgin, I think a farther Reflection may shew us the contrary: On that Supposition her Fate was much less melancholy, and less worthy of such a sorrowful Lamentation. Her Father's Affliction had likewise been much less terrible, than if he had rashly brought so early a Destruction on her; for though he is hereby supposed to have lost all Hopes of Posterity, yet as in the Course of Nature it is to be supposed that she must survive him, he had at least during his own Life had the Comfort of his Daughter's to support him. Whereas, if he had not only forfeited the Prospect of future Descendants, but had done this by the violent immediate Death of his only Child, and in Consequence of a Vow intended for the Good of his People, his Case was in every Respect much more melancholy and pitiable, and such an annual mournful Celebration of it by the Daughters of *Israel* much more probable, rational and useful.

Upon the whole, if *Jephthah* really sacrificed his Daughter, the whole Account is then Natural, Easy, and Intelligible. Every Circumstance recorded is some way expressive of the Horror of it, and all the Consequences such as we should naturally expect on so dreadful an Occasion.—The only Difficulty is, how *Jephthah* came to be guilty of a Fact, which to us appears so horrid; what Inducement he could have to transgress, as we think, the plain and express Command of God in this Case, and his own natural Affection, which yet he sufficiently expresses towards his Daughter. If any rational Account can
be

be given of this, one would imagine there should be an End of the Dispute, since the plain obvious Meaning of the History is literally for a Sacrifice, and the Objections against it have arisen merely from the supposed Improbability of the Thing itself. This Difficulty will best be cleared by an Examination of the several Objections, which have been made against this Interpretation, which I shall collect and place in the strongest Light in the Words of those who have most acutely urged them ; and doubt not but that the most impartial Review of them will not only leave us in our former Opinion, but confirm us in it, to which a View of the Inconsistencies of the other Construction will not a little contribute.

I shall at present observe, as a strong positive Evidence of the Reality of her being sacrificed, that those among whom this written Account was first published, received it in this Sense ; the *Jews* themselves universally believed it, without any Exception, as far as appears, for above a thousand Years after Christ. The first Author* that I find taken Notice of as opposing it, lived in the twelfth Century. The Testimony of *Josephus*† is express to the Purpose, and the whole primitive Church was of the same Opinion. This has often been observed, and with great Weight I think, in the present Argument.— A very worthy Writer of Sacred History§, who was earnest against this Notion, endeavours to obviate the Force of this Consideration, by observing, “ that
“ the general Consent of the Fathers was probably
“ owing to the Testimony of those two *Jews*, *Josephus*
“ and *Philo* ; but that they had no certain Tradition

* *R. Kimchi.*

† Μετά τῶν διδασκάλων θύσας τὴν παῖδα ἀλοκαύτως, ὥστε νόμιμον, ὅτε τῷ θεῷ κεχαρισμένη θυσιάαν ἐπέβλεπον. *Joseph. Antiq. Jud. Lib. 5. Cap. 9. P. 158. Ed. Gelen.*

§ *Howel's Hist. of the Bible. Vol. I. P. 325.*

“ to build their Assertion on, and therefore it is
 “ only to be looked on as their private Opinion ;”
 and he adds an Instance as parallel, wherein these
 two learned *Jews* were confessedly mistaken. I
 must be so ingenuous as to own, that the Testi-
 mony of *Philo* in this Particular has escaped my Ob-
 servation, and the Cause needs not any feigned Au-
 thorities. However, as his Evidence is admitted
 by this Writer, one might argue upon a Supposi-
 tion, that is granted ; but it is not here necessary,
 for whether *Philo* has given his Sentence in the
 Case or not, not any one Part of this Author’s Re-
 flections will hold good upon Examination. The
 Consent of the Fathers was not built only on the Tes-
 timony of these two *Jews*. They had very sufficient
 Means of knowing the Sense of the whole *Jewish*
 Nation in this Particular. Some of them were
 themselves converted *Jews*, and others had great
 Opportunities of consulting those who were uncon-
 verted on this Subject. It was easy to know what
 Notion they had of a History, which was daily read
 amongst them. As soon as different Constructions
 of an ancient History are once advanced, Men, we
 find, are always divided in their Determinations.
 But the Fathers were unanimous in their Judgment,*
 from whence we may safely conclude, that the
Jews amongst whom they so much conversed, were
 so likewise, and that they had never thought of
 more than one Meaning in this plain Relation.
 Some of the primitive Writers condemn, others ex-
 cuse, and others justify the Fact, but all agree in

* Justin. Martyr. Quæst. & Resp. ad Orthodox. Quæst. 99.—
 Tertullian adv. Marcion. Lib. 4.—Athanas. Synopsis S. S. Lib.
 Jud.—Epiphanius adv. Hæres. Lib. 3.—Ambros. in Pf. civ.—
 De Officiis, Cap. 12.—De Hort. ad Virg.—De Virginibus, Lib.
 iii.—Hieronym. Epist. ad Julianum.—adv. Jovinian.—Augustin.
 Quæst. in Jud.—Chrysostom. Homil. de Jephtha.

the Notion of the Fact itself. Nor was this any otherwise built on the Testimony of these two *Jews*, than as that was confirmed by the concurrent Opinion of the whole *Jewish* Church: These Writers only might expressly have mentioned and asserted it, but none had ever contradicted it; and indeed *Josephus* mentions it not as a Point of Controversy, but as a known and allowed Fact. This may likewise disprove what is next added, that "they had not any certain Tradition to build their Assertion on;" which, in the only allowable Meaning that can be fixed on the Words, is said without Proof and against Reason. The Certainty of Tradition is not at the best unquestionable, but what Sense the *Jews* did understand this Passage in, these learned Writers must know; and that they did universally understand it of a real Sacrifice, is evident, not only because we know of none that in those Times ever disputed the Meaning of it, but because it is thus mentioned by one of them at least, as an acknowledged Thing. He does not argue concerning it, but relates it in a plain Manner. Now Consider,---This was not a Notion which could be overlooked, neglected or forgotten, so that after a long Silence on the Subject, some wise Men might arise, and put their own Sense on it, which on their Authority might pass undisputed; but the *Jews* must all along have had some Notion of it one Way or other. Their holy Books were daily read, repeated, and explained to them, and there was scarce a single Instance in their History more memorable than this we are treating of. Must it not then be of great Consequence to know what the *Jews* themselves thought of the Meaning of this Passage; and if they had but one Opinion in the Case, must it not be of great Weight in Confirmation of that? There is not any Case in which Tradition can be of greater Force, than in the

the Determination of the Meaning of a Matter of Fact so early committed to Writing. Had we any Thing of the same Nature in our own History, tho' done never so long since, yet it must be very material to know, what Notion the People of this Kingdom, and all our Writers have had of it; and if they have always given the same Account of it, we should certainly receive that as the indisputable Sense, tho' the Words of the original Writer might now possibly have admitted of another Interpretation. Yet this is much more strongly applicable to the *Jews*, than to any other Nation in the World. Their civil and religious History was the same, and their original Records contained the Lessons of their present Duty. These were constantly taught to all the People, and none of them could be unacquainted with this Passage, or not form some Judgment of it; whereas the Histories of other Kingdoms employ the Time only of Men of Leisure and Speculation. This Book of *Judges* is supposed by the best Commentators *, and for very probable Reasons, to have been penned by *Samuel*, who continued, as 'tis thought, the *Jewish* History down to his own Time. If this be allowed, this Account of *Jephthah* and his Vow, was written within a very few Years after the Thing happened, when all very sufficiently knew what was the Reality of this Fact, and had any then attempted to put a new Interpretation upon it, he would immediately have been contradicted by the whole Nation, who would have appealed directly to the Notions of their Ancestors, and to what they had universally received from them in this Particular. Suppose, for Instance, that *Jephthah's* Daughter was really confined only to a State of perpetual Virginity, if any should within an Age or two have taught that she was sacrificed, would it

* See *Patrick's* Commentary.

not have been in the Power of every *Jew* to have disproved it by constant Tradition; and tho' an Affectation of Singularity and of peculiar Discernment, or of Affection to the first Broacher of it, might lead particular Persons to embrace a novel Opinion, in Opposition to plain Evidence, yet could it have prevailed generally, so as to have silenced the Original and true Notion of it? If we descend to lower Periods of Time, the same Difficulty will still return; and tho', as all Error prevails gradually, we should suppose, that by Degrees a Majority might give in to the wrong Side of the Question, yet the other Notion would at least have been continued, and the Truth would still have been retained by some. The Custom of an annual Lamentation by the Daughters of *Israel* is of great Weight in this Consideration, and must greatly serve to continue a right Notion of the History itself. They must know, what particular Misfortune of hers it was, that they thus mournfully commemorated; nor is it conceivable, that their Opinion of it could at any Period be so altered, as not only to substitute another Interpretation of it, but entirely to extinguish the true one.

But it may be expected, that we should have some farther Evidence of the Reality of this Tradition, and the Notion of the *Jews* in this Particular. The Interval is long from the Time of this Fact to that of *Josephus's* Writing his Antiquities, upwards as is usually computed of 1200 Years; and though he mentions indeed this Sacrifice as an uncontroverted Point, and is not contradicted in his Account by any Writer near his Time, yet it would be more satisfactory and convincing, if we could produce any other Testimonies to the same Purpose in all that intermediate Space. Nor is this wanting in this Case, for though the *Jewish*
Writers

Writers in that Interval are few, the sacred ones excepted, who wrote not Comments on former Times, but Advices and Exhortations to their own; yet every Translation of these sacred Books is a full Testimony in this Respect, and shews, what was the Notion of those Times in which, and Persons by whom they were translated. Of these the LXX is the first, being written more than 300 Years before *Josephus*; and this Version, as before observed, is so rendred as not only to confirm the Notion of a Sacrifice, but to exclude any other. The *Syriack* Version indeed, if their own Pretensions were to be admitted, would rise much earlier*, even within 150 Years of this History; but though their Pretensions are generally set aside, and there are great Difficulties in fixing the Date of it, yet the Version itself is in great Esteem, and allowed to be genuine and faithful; and this, again, as before observed, expressly confines the Object of the Vow to a human Person, and the Form of it to a copulative Meaning; which shews the Sense of the early Age, when it was translated into that Language.—The *Chaldee* Paraphrase is still more express. This, according to the paraphrastical Method, not only relates the Fact as of a human Sacrifice, but censures it as such. Those who place this at the lowest Date on any probable Grounds, place it some time before *Josephus*; but though the Targum might be put in Form by *Jonathan*, yet the Substance of it is generally allowed to be many Centuries earlier, even as high as their Return from the *Babylonish* Captivity, when the People had so far lost their native Language and contracted the *Chaldean*, that it was found necessary for their Use, to explain and

* *P. Simon* Critic. Hist. Vet. Test. Lib. ii. Cap. 15.

paraphrase the Text in this Tongue; and the *Jews* themselves put so great a Value on this Paraphrase, that they make it of equal Authority with the Bible itself, and ascribe it to the same Original. The more amazing it is, that so knowing a Writer should call this the private Opinion of *Josephus* and *Philo*, whereas there was at that Time but one Opinion in the Case, and they spoke the Sense of the whole Nation in this Particular, confirmed by every Version then extant.—But to lessen the Weight of what might justly be urged on this Head from their Testimony, he endeavours to give a like Instance, in which they were confessedly mistaken, in that they gave in to “ that senseless Opinion of “ the Angels begetting Giants on the Women that “ were before the Deluge, which they took to be “ the Meaning of those Words in *Genesis*, that “ *the Sons of God went in unto the Daughters of “ Men.*” But this Case is far from being parallel on many Accounts. In the first Place it is not certain, that they did so understand this Passage. *Josephus* only mentions the Word, and *Philo**, who is more paraphrastical, yet is not upon the whole clear in his Opinion; for in the latter Part of that very Chapter he speaks of heavenly Qualities, as denoting a heavenly Original, and elsewhere gives a rational Account of the Title of *Sons of God*.—In the next Place, this Case was at a much greater Distance from them, more than twice the other Period, and consequently the Tradition more uncertain. This was long before their Law, nay even before the Deluge, when the human Species, as it were, began again anew, and this Passage, if there was any Danger of mistaking it, could not be as-

* Οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ τῇ μὲν κεχρημένοι τῷ ἑνὶ υἱοῖ θεῶ ἀποσπασθέντες διούτως. Phil Jud. P. 341. Ed. Gelen.

certained by the Sentence of any that could have received it by Descent from other Generations that could have known the Fact: Again, there was no Institution in this, as in the other Case, to keep up the Remembrance of the Thing, which Kind of Commemorations do much contribute to preserve the true Sense of it.—And lastly, which is the most material Observation of all, in this, if it was their Opinion, these Authors are expressly contradicted by the original Text, the *Chaldean*, *Samaritan* and *Arabic* Versions, with many others, whereas in the other Instance they were as expressly confirmed by all these: Which makes, I presume, a great Difference in the Case, shews that these Opinions were by no means parallel, and that this Error, if it be truly ascribed to them, yet does not invalidate the Weight of their Testimony in the Subject now before us.

Thus have I illustrated the Authority and the Reasons, which seem sufficient to me to satisfy any impartial Person, that *Jephthab* really sacrificed his Daughter: It will give some farther Account of, and Light into the Fact, to examine the several Objections, which have been made against it.

The Principal of these is, that it is not to be conceived, that *Jephthab* would have been guilty of so inhuman and execrable a Parricide. It is taken for granted, that such a Sacrifice was not only abominable in itself, but particularly forbidden by the *Jewish* Law; and the next Inference is, that one who is recorded for a worthy and faithful Person could not be supposed capable of violating thus the Laws of God and Man.—And here those, who entirely agree in confirming the Reality of the Fact, are much divided in their Opinion of the Nature of the Fact itself, some allowing it execrable, yet accounting for it; others alleviating it

from the Opinion of the Person committing it, and the Difficulty of reconciling some different Precepts of that Religion ; and others thinking it entirely justifiable by a particular Precept in the *Levitical* Law, if not in the making of the Vow, yet in the execution of it, and what Each has advanced to maintain their several Opinions, was much too considerable to have been despised, or passed over in Silence by any, who had Thoughts of reviving the Dispute.

Those, who think the Unlawfulness of the Fact liable to as heavy Aggravations, as even those who deny the Commission of it, impute it to the general Corruption of the Time which *Jephthab* lived in. There is a melancholy Account given of the Apostacy and Idolatry of the Children of *Israel* at that Time, in the 6th Verse of the preceding Chapter. *They did Evil again in the Sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashtaroth, and the Gods of Syria, and the Gods of Sydon, and the Gods of Moab, and the Gods of the Children of Ammon, and the Gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served not him.* There was scarce any Kind of Idolatry, we see, that they left unpracticed ; and it is particularly remarked, that the Gods of the Children of *Ammon* were amongst the Objects of their Superstition. Now of these was *Molech*, to whom human Sacrifices were offered ; and it is farther observable, that the War they were now engaged in, was against these very *Ammonites*, from whence it is conjectured, that *Jephthab* might be induced to hope for better Success, if he offered the same high Sacrifices to the true God, which they offered to a false one*. Some have likewise laid some Stress on *Jephthab*'s having been banished into the Land of *Tob*, where vain Men were gathered

* *Lightfoot* Chronica Temp. & Ordo Text. Vol. i. p. 51. Edit. *Ror.*

unto him, where from an idolatrous Nation and bad Company, he might be supposed to have learnt such bad Practices. But we have no Occasion to go so far for the Original of such an Iniquity, which we have seen he might learn nearer home. The Children of *Israel* themselves were involved in all Kinds of Superstition, nor had even this escaped them, so that in conforming himself to the People over whom he was now made Governor, there was but too much Danger of his being drawn into such unjustifiable Practices. And as it was with the People, so with the Priest. The same Degeneracy had overrun the Sacred Order, by which the Execution of this Sacrifice as well as the Vowing of it, is accounted for. The High Priest and Elders were either so ignorant that they could not, or so negligent that they did not inform *Jephthab* better, than that he was obliged to the Execution of his Vow; and thus his Daughter, by the united Fault of People, Priests and Governour, really fell a Sacrifice. Mr. *Selden* and Bishop *Taylor*† both refer to a famed Story amongst the *Jewish* Rabbies, that this Matter rested upon a Punctilio between *Jephthab* and *Phinebas*, that the former would not go to the other because he thought himself the superior Person, and the other would not interpose, till a proper Application was made to him. Betwixt both the Virgin lost her Life, but both Prince and People were punished; *Jephthab* with a Palsy, and *Phinebas* was deprived of the Spirit of God.—Without laying any Weight on such Traditions, it shows at least their Opinion of the Reality of the Fact; but there is one Circumstance in it, which to those who so severely condemn the Fact, may seem to give some Light to a memorable Alteration at this Time in the Line of the High-Priests. Dr. *Lightfoot* ‡ was, I think,

† *Selden* de Jure Nat. & Gent. Lib. iv. Cap. II. P. 532.
Taylor's Duct. Dub. Lib. iii. P. 208.

‡ *Lightfoot* Loco supra cit.

the first that observed on this Subject, that it was very remarkable, and yet entirely unaccounted for, that at this Time the Office of the High-Priest-hood was lost from the Family of *Eleazar*, and translated to that of *Ithamar*, another of the Descendants of *Aaron*, as appears from the first Book of *Samuel*: And as no Reason is assigned in the History for so unusual a Change, he conjectures it might be owing to the Misbehaviour or Neglect of *Phinebas* in this very Particular. If now there was any Authority for this his judicial Loss of the Spirit hereby, this would be a plain Cause of his being deposed, and of altering the Course of the Succession. But this is left only as a Conjecture, and a very possible Method at least of solving the Difficulty here objected.

Others, who know not how to admit of so entire and universal a Degeneracy amongst all Orders and Degrees of Men in the *Jewish* Nation, think they may both account for the Fact, and alleviate somewhat of the Guilt of it, from the Opinion of the Person committing it, and the Difficulty of reconciling the several Directions given them by *Moses* in this Particular. The Vow itself they give up as rash and unadvised, yet not such as proceeded from a wicked Mind, but from an over-zealous one, not sufficiently attentive to the important Consequences of it. But when it was made, and the Event had determined it to the Person of his Daughter, here was a considerable Case of Conscience arising, which required great Impartiality for a faithful Determination. 'Tis true, the Precept in *Deut.* which forbids human Sacrifices, was express and clear, but it is as true, that those Precepts, which require a faithful Performance of all Vows, are as strong and positive, and as he was situated, he could not fulfil

fulfil both : The Question then was, which must be violated ? A Christian Casuist would indeed make no Question of this, but would give a very ready and a very just Answer to it. But we are clear of many Prejudices in this Case, which the *Jews* were not, and we must consider the Case, not according to our own Notions, but theirs. Such particular Vows are very justly discontinued and discouraged amongst us, but they were in very frequent Use with them, and they had high Notions of the Indispensableness of of their Performance. These were the Words of their Law. *When thou shalt vow a Vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it ; for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be Sin in thee, Deut. xxiii. 21. and again, ver. 23. That which is gone out of thy Lips thou shalt keep and perform, even as a Free-will-offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy Mouth.* Suitably the wise Man advises and directs, *Eccles. v. 4. When thou hast vowed a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no Pleasure in Fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed : Better it is, that thou should not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.* And then he proceeds to cut off this usual Excuse for the Non-performance of Vows, that they were ill-founded, or not well considered : *Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin, neither say thou before the Angel, that it was an Error : Wherefore should God be angry at thy Voice ; and destroy the Work of thy Hands ?* that is, as Bishop Patrick*, according to the obvious Sense of it, paraphrases it, “ Think not of being absolved from the Obligations
 “ thou layest on thyself in the Presence of God and
 “ his holy Angels by such foolish Excuses as these ;
 “ it was a Mistake ; I did not mind what I said ;

* Patrick's Paraphrase. Vol. iii. P. 438.

“ or

“ or that was not my Meaning ; for this will but
 “ encrease thy Guilt ; and why shouldst thou far-
 “ ther increase the Anger of the Almighty, &c.”
 I am well aware, that this Advice of the royal
 Preacher is of a much later Date than the Case of
Jephthab, nor is it mentioned as that which, led
 him to the Execution of his rash Vow, but as an
 Instance of the firm Opinion which they still re-
 tained of the Inviolableness of a Vow, and that the
 Subject Matter of it, though wrong, was not after-
 wards to be pleaded as a Dispensation from the Ob-
 servance of it. *Jephthab*’s own Words to this Pur-
 pose are very full and emphatical. *I have opened
 my Mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.* This
 was the Principle he thought himself obliged to
 act by, and was immoveably determined to fulfil.
 The Thought of executing his Vow shocked him,
 but the Non-execution of it was a Thought not to
 be admitted at all. There are other like strong
 Expressions of the indispensable Obligation of a
 Vow in the Old Testament, and no Instance of
 their making them without punctually fulfilling
 them. Whereas our more prudent Disuse of them
 has entirely freed us from all their Prepossessions
 on this Account, and enabled us to judge more
 coolly and impartially in the Case ; and we, who
 think it rash to make any extraordinary Vows at
 all, are very ready to absolve from the Performance
 of them when ill made. On the other Hand,
 the Gospel-precepts having improved our natural
 Sentiments of Humanity, and sweetened our Dispo-
 sitions by their benevolent Influence, we are more
 shocked at the Thoughts of this horrid Murder
 than probably were the *Jews*. As they were set
 apart for the particular Purpose of keeping up the
 Knowledge and Worship of the one true God, and
 were commissioned utterly to destroy and extirpate
 all

all idolatrous Nations and People, they were less moved with the Violence, which they were forced to offer to others, in Cases where their Religion was concerned. They were particularly cautioned, *Deut. xiii. 6, &c.* not to be influenced by the Ties of Blood or Affection, or any other partial Motive, to transgress this general End of their Separation, but they were directed to put to death without Mercy their nearest Relation or dearest Friend, that should attempt to seduce them to any Violence of these Precepts of their Law. The Grounds and Reasons of a Direction, which bears such an Appearance of Severity are beside the present Question, and have of late been largely illustrated and vindicated. I am only observing the Fact, that there was such a Precept in their Law, and that their Notions and Practices were suitable to it; and though the Case here specified was only that of Idolatry, yet this was the Foundation of a strong Prepossession with them, that where any Point of Religion interfered, or was thought to do so, with that which would otherwise have been a moral Duty, in this Case, whether real or supposed, the latter was to give way, and they were rather to offend against Man than God. There were likewise, as *Jephthah* well knew, some express Limitations in their Law itself to the Precepts of not taking away the Life of another, but there were none to the Direction of fulfilling their Vows, and where the Law made no Exceptions, he might not think himself at Liberty to make any: Again, the Authority of Parents over their Children, of Masters over their Servants, and of Magistrates over their Subjects, was in those Times very extensive and almost absolute; their Lives and Liberties were in a great Measure at their Disposal; and though they were bound in Conscience to a reasonable Use of their Power, yet even an arbitrary Procedure in Persons vested with such Authority was much less criminal

criminal than in a like Injury betwixt Persons on a Level who could claim no Right over, or owed no Duty to each other. *Jephthab*, however reluctant, might think that his paternal and regal Power over his own Child might justify or excuse at least the Violence offered to her, but he knew of no Authority that he had to release himself from the Performance of a Vow made to God. Nothing but a superior Power, he judged, could dispence with any Obligation. The Duty owing from him to his Maker, made him think his Engagement unalterably binding, and the Duty owing to him from his Daughter made him think this his absolute and severe Disposol of her the more excuseable. The Struggle which must be supposed to arise in him on this Occasion, and the Arguments which influenced him to this severe Determination are thus well represented by a rhetorical Writer*. *Quid agam? Victimisne Humanis ei litabo, qui severius id ne fieret, prohibuit? nec placere mihi nisi parricidio licebit? At sanctè pollicitus sum. Quà igitur Fronte compellabo, cum opus est, Deum, Voti Reus, nec solutâ quam ultro ipse promisi, Victimâ. Quicquamne carum est nimis aut pretiosum, quod donetur Deo? Quem effudero Sanguinem in Arâ, meus est; quam eripueram Vitam, Dedi.* I do not after all say, that his Judgment was rightly formed, but these I doubt not were some of the Grounds at least, on which he formed it as he did. He had reduced himself to a very unhappy Dilemma, which, whatever we may think, was not so easy to be resolved. It was resolved at last, according to those Principles which then most prevailed; and if we judge them insufficient, it will shew however, that this extraordinary Event, if not strictly defensible, yet is not entirely

* *Robinsoni Annales Mundi. Lib. ix. P. 518.*

unaccountable. — But this will farther appear by examining the Foundation of their Opinion, who not only agree in the Reality of the Fact, but think it justifiable by a particular Precept in the Levitical Law.

There are not wanting, who tho' they condemn the Rashness of *Jephthab* in making this Vow, yet think that after the making of it, he was really obliged to put it in Execution, even at the Expence of his Daughter's Life. And indeed, the Passage alleged in Proof of it seems at first Sight so full to the Purpose, that Commentators are greatly perplexed in their Account of it, and find much Difficulty to get clear of the Consequence. The Words are *Lev. xxvii. 28, 29. notwithstanding no devoted Thing that a Man shall devote unto the Lord of all that be both both of Man and Beast, and of the Field of his Possession, shall be sold or redeemed. Every devoted Thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of Men shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to Death.* It is allowed by all Writers on each Side of the Question, that the Devoting here spoken of is not meant of a common Vow, but of a particular Form with a Curse annexed, which is called *Cherem*, by which the Thing devoted was made incapable of being redeemed, or of reverting to common Use, as in all the Cases mentioned before in that Chapter it might. The Sense of this Passage must depend therefore on the Notion and Use of this Vow of *Cherem*; and they who oppose the Opinion of any Authority lodged hereby in private Persons to devote to Destruction any of their Family, are in their Account of it as inconsistent with each other, and sometimes with themselves, as with those, whose Interpretation they endeavour to confute. Mr. *Selden* * has particularly laboured
this

* *Selden de Jure Nat. & Gent. Lib. IV. Cap. 7. P. 459 Ed. Wilkins.*

this Point, and given us every Notion and Use of it that prevailed amongst the *Jews*, the last of which, he observes, was by way of Imprecation. It is not necessary to consider his Distinctions any farther than as they relate immediately to the present Argument. Now the first Use, he says, of *Cberem* is to signify the sacred Gift itself, which was devoted to God or to holy Uses, referring to the Verse before us. But in what Sense then was this accursed? If it was dedicated with a Form of Execration on themselves if they violated their Vow, as most Commentators are willing to interpret this Passage, then it might in some Sense be stiled a *Cberem*; but this would coincide with his last Division, and destroy his fourfold Distinction. But if it was not devoted with any such Imprecation, what was the Nature of the Curse, by which it is distinguished from the other kind of Vows mentioned in the former Part of the Chapter? To be applied to holy Uses could in the Nature of the Thing imply no such Notion. It was with them a Privilege, not a Punishment, to be employed in the Service of the Sanctuary. An accursed Person or Thing must be the less, and not the more fit for sacred Offices. If indeed it was to be consumed or offered up in Sacrifice, this might well be esteemed a Curse with regard to the Destruction of the Person or Thing itself, tho' it might be *Holy unto the Lord*, as the Text here expresses it, being offered up in his Service, in Testimony of his Providence and of his Righteousness. The Sense of this Text therefore depends much on understanding, whether the *Cberem* or Curse spoken of belongs to the Thing devoted, or the Person devoting, if he fulfilled not his Vow. The greater Part of the Commentators before referred to are pleased, without any Attempt of an Argument or Reason for their Construction, to understand it currently of a
Vow

Vow with Imprecation ; which indeed, if there was Authority for it, would make Sense of their Interpretation, that tho' the Things vowed by common Forms might be redeemed according to their Estimation, yet if Execrations were used in Case of Failure, here they should be obliged to the strict and literal Performance of their Vow. But there is not the least Intimation in the Text, that this *Cberem* was to be understood of an imprecatory Vow. It is the Thing itself, which is spoken of as devoted or accursed, or doomed to Destruction, which therefore was not to be redeemed, but was surely to be put to Death. Accordingly this is allowed by some of the most considerable Writers in the Opposition*, however inconsistent with their after Endeavours to disprove this Sense of the Law. They tell us, that being devoted here signifies the same as being accursed and appointed to be slain, which, if true, will make it very difficult to evade the Consequence, since the Text is so express for the absolute Completion of the Vow. Indeed the Evasion usually offered is that which Dr. *Edwards*, in the fore-cited Place, gives in these Words, that “ *Cberem*, which is the Word here used, always “ signifies either Persons devoted to Slaughter, destined to Death for their Wickedness, as the *Ama- “ lekites*, &c. or Things destined to utter Destruction, as *Jericho* and *Ai*, &c.” But this is in express Contradiction to the very Words of the Text, which speaks not of whole Nations and Cities appointed by God to Destruction, but of some single Thing or Person devoted by a private Owner out of his own Property. *No devoted Thing that a Man shall devote unto the Lord of all that be*

* *Jenkins's Reasonableness*, &c. Vol. II. P. 3. 6.

Wall's Critical Notes. Vol. I. P. 93.

Edwards on difficult Texts. Vol. I. P. 87.

both, both of Man and Beast, and of the Field of his Possession, shall be redeemed. This is so express, not only by the Use of a general Term, as *no devoted Thing*, but by descending to all the several Particulars which could be in a private Person's possession, and specifying peculiarly the devoting of *Man* as well as *Beast* and *Field*, that it would be difficult to frame the Expression more to this Purpose, if it had been intended; and even Mr. *Selden** acknowledges this to be sufficient to determine the Meaning of the Words in the ensuing Verse. *None devoted, which shall be devoted of Men*, that is, *out of Men*, and not *by Men*, as some have rendred it, *shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to Death.* The Sense of these Verses appear so plain in Conjunction, that for that very Reason some of the ancient *Jews*, as the last cited Author informs us, separated them, and supposed them to relate entirely to distinct and different Subjects; and a very excellent modern Writer† follows their Method. They suppose the first of these Verses to relate to voluntary Vows of private Persons, the other to Nations devoted to Destruction by God's own Appointment. But here again, there is not the least Intimation from the Text or Context of any such sudden Transition of the Subject. The whole Chapter treats of the Vows of private Persons, and this 28th Verse is allowed still to relate to these voluntary Engagements; and that then the sacred Writer should abruptly leave this Point without any Notice of it, and speak of quite another, about their indispensable Obligation to destroy all utterly, when they were the Instruments of God's Vengeance on idolatrous Nations, is utterly unaccountable; nay, this 28th Verse is not clear and decisive

* *Loco supra cit.* § Cap. 10. P. 490. † *Leland's Answer to the Moral Philosopher*, Vol. I. P. 150.

without the subsequent one. It is said that no such devoted or accursed Person or Thing should be redeemed, but it is not determined, how it was to be disposed of, it is only said, that it was *most holy to the Lord*, but not in what Method it was to be made so. This the next Verse determines, which after repeating that it should not be redeemed, appoints that it should *be put to Death*, that is certainly, that it should be offered up in Sacrifice. The Connection of these Verses is in all Appearance so strong, that had not some ill Consequences been apprehended from the Concession, there had in all Probability no Doubt been made of it. Mr. *Selden* expressly charges these Consequences upon it*, that such an Interpretation would have invalidated the sixth Commandment, and opened the Way to voluntary Murder. But of this there seems little Danger, since the Devotement could only be by those, who had an absolute Power over the others, and these must stand in such a Relation to them, as ordinarily to have an Affection for their Persons and an Interest in their Preservation; nor does History present us with any supposed Example of it, except in the Subject of the present Question. Nor was this dreaded Consequence at the most any Argument against the Meaning of the Words in the Verses before us, but a Presumption only that they ought not to mean thus, and not any Proof that they do not. The worthy Person just now referred to †, who has most lately considered this Point, thinks the Mention of devoting *a Field* a strong Argument against this Interpretation, since this was incapable of being sacrificed or consumed by Fire. But whatever the Author he writes against might assert, the Text mentions nothing of Burnt-offerings in par-

* Cap. 6. P. 467.

† *Leland*. Vol. I. P. 149.

ticular, and a Field may be doomed to Destruction in the Sense that it was capable of, that is, it might be laid waste in token of the Divine Displeasure against any Iniquity committed in that Place, whenever such Case should happen; and might thus be Holy, or separated from common Use, in the same Sense that any other accursed Thing could be. As I sincerely wish well to the Cause, which this Writer has so well defended, I would equally guard against the Inference, which Unbelievers have drawn from hence, which I shall not fail to attempt, after having observed what has been offered by good Men in Confirmation of this Interpretation. For those who judge from hence, that *Jephthab* was really obliged hereby to fulfil his Vow by the Sacrifice of his Daughter, seem at least to argue very closely and convincingly. I shall use the Words of one of undoubted Piety and distinguished Judgment. "It is plain from this Text," says he*, "that some both Things and Persons might be devoted, to wit, such Things and Persons over which the Person, who devoted them, had a Power; that no such, either devoted Things or Persons, could be sold or redeemed; that all Persons so devoted were to be put to Death; and since the Persons, which might thus be devoted, are reckoned among the Possessions of those who might thus devote them, and therefore cannot so properly be understood of the *Canaanites* and *Amalekites*, who were not in their Power, as of Persons actually under their Power; since no Persons are so much under the Power of others, as Slaves in the Power of their Lords, and Children of their Parents, it is from hence with great Probability of Reason concluded by some, that

* Bishop *Smalridge's* Sermons, P. 226.

“ Parents had in some Circumstances a Power of devoting their Children to Destruction ; that *Jephthah* did by his Vow thus devote his Daughter, and that having thus devoted her, he might think himself obliged by this Law to fulfil his Vow by putting her to Death.” All this and much more to this Purpose is to be found in *Lud. Cappellus**, who argues from hence, not only that *Jephthah* might think himself obliged by this Law to sacrifice his Daughter, but likewise that he judged right in thinking so ; and that on this Account he was not capable of being absolved from his Vow of *Cherem*, by the high Priest, or any of his Order. His Reasonings on this Point are difficult to be dealt with, and he has guarded against the several Exceptions which he was aware might be made to this Interpretation of it. Indeed the only material ones are the appearing Inconsistency of it with that Precept in *Deut. xii. 31.* which expressly forbids human Sacrifices, and the severe, if not unjust Nature of the Law itself. But there is no great Difficulty in the first of these Objections. For this Direction, *Lev. xxvii. 28, 29.* was given before that other in *Deut.* and therefore if there was any Difference betwixt them, that must be reconciled to this, and understood consistently with it. If this Text really meant to authorize the Destruction of such devoted Persons, then the other must be understood as including every Instance, but this, which had been before allowed. It must be considered as a general Rule with one only Exception, which a preceding Law had permitted.—But, was not then this supposed Law severe and unjust in itself, contrary to the Principles of Humanity and Religion? Why, even in this Sense of it, it does not approve

* Note Criticæ in Vet. Test. P. 423.

or recommend the Practice of devoting any Persons to Destruction. It only requires, that a Vow thus made should punctually be fulfilled, and that no Redemption should in this Case be allowed of. But certainly there is much Difference betwixt warranting and encouraging this Kind of Vow by *Cberem* or Curse, and insisting on the exact Completion of it, when once it was made. This might be intended to the very contrary End, even to discourage this Practice, by the Mischief and Grief, which it might in the Event bring on themselves, and those perhaps who were nearest and dearest to them. And the very Circumstance, which has sometimes afforded Matter of surprize to some, that this of *Jephthab's* is a single Instance, not to be paralleled through the whole Bible, may on this Supposition be rationally accounted for. If this Law, which peremptorily required the Destruction of such devoted Persons, was designed in *Ferrorem*, to prevent all rash Vows, then one such eminent Example as this was enough to put an End to all such Methods of devoting, and to work that Effect, which it was calculated to produce.—But still in this Case the Penalty fell on the Innocent not on the Guilty Person, and we are perhaps at a Loss to account for the Equity of a Law which should make one a Sufferer by the Miscarriage of another.—The Truth is, in such Cases the Penalty fell on both Parties, for every one sees both from the Circumstances of this Affair, and his own pathetical Lamentations, that *Jephthab* was, as well as his Daughter, a severe Sufferer by the Execution of his Vow. And as for the Article of an Innocent Person's being involved in Ruin by the Default of one who should have supported and protected them, this should at most be of no greater Force in this Instance, than in that which in God Almighty had expressly

expressly threatned, that he would visit the Sins of Fathers upon Children. No Motive was thought of greater Weight to influence Men to a right Conduct, than a Concern for the Welfare of their Relatives and Descendants, and therefore this was in both these Cases used, and those, who believe that God was the Author of this Institution, that he has a Right in any Method he thinks proper to resume the Life he gave, and that he will regard and recompence in a future State, the Merits and Sufferings of Persons in this, can find no Difficulty in the Equity of these Dispensations. Even human Governments, which can neither accurately distinguish the Worth of Individuals, nor sufficiently recompence their Calamities, are yet forced to proceed upon the same Principle, and to influence their Subjects by a Regard to the Welfare of their Posterity. Our own in particular has thus appointed in the Cases of Treason and Suicide, that their Fortunes shall be forfeited as well as their Lives, and thus that their nearest Relations shall be deprived of their Maintenance as well as of their Friend. Were we now disposed to raise Objections, might we not plausibly argue, Is not this a great Hardship on the innocent Survivors, who are thus, without any Fault of their own, ruined in every Respect, and lose that which should be their Support, as well as that which was probably their chief Comfort? Is it not Calamity more than sufficient to lose a Friend or Relation in either of those Methods, and must they likewise for that very Reason be undone in their temporal Interest, and be deprived of the only remaining Means of affording Consolation in their Distress? The Objection seems specious, but the Case is, we are not born for ourselves only, but for Society. And as a Regard to the Prosperity of Relations is one of the strongest Ties that can be laid upon human Nature, to keep them from Evil,

it is justly applied to that End, and it is for the Benefit of the whole, that it should be so applied, though it may in particular Instances fall hard upon innocent Persons, who must look to another World for their Refuge and Recompence. If then such Provisions are made by human Authority only without any Imputation on their Wisdom or Justice, how much more unexceptionable is such a Precept, when it is backed by a divine Commission, and comes immediately from the Proprietor and Governor of the World? * If now we understand this Direction in this Light, we avoid all the Difficulties that Commentators have been driven to in explaining it, or rather in endeavouring to explain it away; we admit the plain obvious Sense of the Words; we clear it from any Inconsistency with the other Directions of the Law, and guard it from any ill Consequences, which might be drawn to the Prejudice of this Religion, or any Imputation on the great and gracious Author of it.

The Consequence of this Interpretation with regard to *Jephthah's* Vow is strong and conclusive. Whatever Imputations we may lay upon his Rashness in making such a Vow, and devoting indiscriminately the first Person he met; yet when it was thus solemnly done, and his Daughter unhappily proved to be the Person, by this particular Precept *she was not to be redeemed*, but according to the express Words of it, *was surely to be put to Death*. According to this Construction, his Lamentation was such as we should expect, and his Opinion in the Case was right and well founded. *I have opened*

* Certe negandum non est, quin omnimoda ejusmodi cædes ex lege Numinis, cujus imperio universa Rerum Natura subest, (si ita is voluisset) Jure certissimo committi potuisset. Neque ideo de Legis Justitiâ, si ejusmodi sensu intelligenda sit, ullatenus disputandum. *Selden de Jure Nat. & Gent. Lib. IV. Cap. 6.*

my Mouth unto the Lord and I cannot go back. Suitably the High-priest and Great-council acted regularly in not attempting to prevent it, and were not chargeable either with Ignorance or Neglect for their Part in it. And tho' the Lot fell hard on a single Person, yet it was an useful Pattern to all After-ages, and this one Execution might prevent infinite Perjuries, and put an End, as was intended, to such rash Vows in private Persons.

I shall not insist farther on the Certainty of this Interpretation: It is sufficient, that so much may plausibly be said for it, as to leave the Matter at least in Dispute, and consequently to leave Room for different Determinations by the Casuists, if *Jephthah* had consulted them upon the Occasion. Suppose that they determined wrong, yet this is nothing more than what often happens, that wise and good Men are divided in their Opinion on such Subjects, of which I could give a modern Instance. But since there was such a Text, that in Appearance at least required, that one who was so devoted by a private Person *should not be redeemed, but should surely be put to Death*, this might well be the Ground of an Opinion, that her Case was without Remedy, and that Execution must be done upon her. Whether this was rightly interpreted or not in such an Application, it is not necessary to determine, but if it was likely enough to occasion such a Notion, this is sufficient to put an End to all that Astonishment which we sometimes meet with on this Subject, and which can have proceeded only from a very superficial View of it. If we could clearly shew, that this was not the Meaning of that Text, yet if it might have led others into the Mistake, this, though it would not justify the Lawfulness of the Fact, yet would lessen the Wonder of it. However we judge now of this Fact, 'tis plain

that *Jephthah* himself thought his Vow indispensable; and acted upon that Principle. All Charges therefore upon his moral Character, as being guilty of a gross, flagrant, wilful Parricide, are Misrepresentations, and betray a great want of Attention to the Circumstances of this Part of the Sacred History. 'Tis plain, that *Jephthah* did herein what was extremely disagreeable to himself, upon the Notion of his being obliged to do it. His Vow, he thought was not to be violated upon any Account, and he preferred his Duty to God to any other Consideration. The Preservation of an only and beloved Child, and the Comfort and Support of his own future Age, would have tempted many a one to have failed in the Performance of his Vow, even though he had been of his Opinion, that he was strictly obliged to it; but these strong Allurements had no such Effect upon him. He thought he *might not go back*, and therefore *he did with her according to his Vow*, and sacrificed his Daughter's Life and his own Peace and Quiet to what he judged to be an indispensable Obligation. Now whatever odious Colours the Fact itself may be represented in, yet certainly we cannot but applaud that steady Principle of Obedience, which occasioned the Accomplishment of it. Suppose the Mistake to be never so grievous, yet the Piety of the Intention in acting according to his sincere Persuasion and giving up every Comfort in Life to discharge what he thought to be his Duty, must be allowed to be commendable and praise-worthy. *Peter Martyr* therefore very unjustly charges *St. Jerom* and *St. Ambrose* with Inconsistency in this Point*, because they condemn the Fact, and yet commend *Jephthah* for his Resolution in executing it; de-

* Loc. Comm. P. 411.

claring that he was found Faithful, though in a Matter not allowable in itself; upon which he thus expostulates, Can that be a pious Principle which leads to Impiety? Could that be Faithfulness, which led to the Breach of one of God's Commandments? If the Fact was not wicked, why do they condemn it? If it was, how can they applaud the Author of it? with more to the same Purpose.—The Case is in Truth so extremely plain, that one would wonder how so sensible a Writer could so far misapprehend or mistake it, as to argue in this manner against an imaginary Difficulty. The Judgment of these Fathers herein is such as the Generality of Mankind ever has, and ever will concur in. It is impossible not to disapprove of this Fact on some Account or other. Some blame the Beginning, others the Conclusion of it, and some carry their Censure through every Part from its Original to its Consummation. But when we consider only the Execution of it, and consider that according to the Opinion of the unfortunate Person concerned in it, here his Desire of fulfilling his Obligations at all Events, however misguided, claims our Acknowledgments; and though we may wish his Judgment had been better informed, yet we cannot but wish likewise, that all would imitate his disinterested Care to perform what he thought his incumbent Duty. This was the Faithfulness, this the religious Fear of Offending, which St. *Ambrose* applauded, and which every good Man will continue to applaud, whatever he may think of the particular Instance in which it was testified. And is there any Inconsistency now in commending a Man for acting even to his own Prejudice according to his Conscience, though erroneous, and in stigmatizing heavily the Error, which betrayed him into a wrong Action? We have such frequent
In-

Instances of the like kind in common Life, we have so often Occasion to make Observations upon and Allowances to Men, who mean, *very well*, and do *very ill* Things, that it should seem no difficult Matter to apply the same Reflections to a more early Case, and to esteem their Judgment, instead of charging them with Contradiction, who have distinguished betwixt the Action and the Person, and have commended the good Intention of one who was desirous to obey and please his Maker, tho' they have severely censured the supposed Mistake, which misdirected so valuable a Principle.

Upon the whole, *Jephthab* undoubtedly followed herein very sincerely the Direction of his Conscience, and acted a very unacceptable and afflictive Part, rather than violate a solemn Vow, which he had made to God. All Imputations of wilful Transgressions therefore are out of the Question, and are plainly contradicted by the express Words of holy Scripture. It is elsewhere represented as a religious Character, *Psalms* xv. 4. that *he sweareth to his own Hurt and changeth not*, which was very signally *Jephthab's* Case. Whether this Unchangeableness was in this Instance rightly founded, is another Question, and perhaps not so easy to be determined as we generally suppose.—We say indeed, and we say right, that the Subject Matter of a Vow must be lawful in itself, or otherwise it cannot be binding on us; but the Ground of this Opinion is, that no inferior Authority can repeal the Laws of a Superior, and therefore we cannot by any Obligation that we lay upon ourselves, reverse or alter those which God has before laid upon us. But if under a peculiar Dispensation the same Divine Lawgiver, who dictated their Laws, did himself allow, that the Force of some of them might be set aside by the Event of such particular Engagements, and that they should be obliged to

to fulfil their Vows, even in a Point which would otherwise have been unlawful, (tho' this might only be permitted, like another Instance, for the *Hardness of their Hearts*, to guard against worse Consequences, and prevent their trifling with these sacred Engagements) on this Supposition, tho' the Vow itself was wrong, the Discharge of it was right, and I am not sensible that any ill Inference can fairly be drawn from it, either to the Prejudice of their Religion or our own, There is a very remarkable Instance in the sacred History, antecedent to this of *Jephthab*, which will greatly confirm this Supposition. God himself had devoted the Inhabitants of the Land of *Canaan* to Destruction for their Wickedness, and had appointed the *Israelites* to be the Instruments of his Vengeance. They were directed not to make any Agreement with them, or to spare them, but utterly to root them out. However, being imposed upon by the *Gibeonites*, as People of a remote Country, they violated this express Direction. *And Joshua made Peace with them, and made a League with them to let them live, and the Princes of the Congregation sware unto them.* It soon appeared that the Contract was obtained by Fraud, and this solemn Engagement built upon a false Suggestion. Here now was a like Case of Conscience with that before us. Might they not have pleaded, that the Matter of their Oath was unlawful in itself, as being contrary to an express Command of God himself? Might they not have appealed to the Letter of the Law, *Exod. xxiii. 32. Thou shalt make no Covenant with them **, and that therefore it was not in their Power,

* Dr. *Shuckford* is of Opinion, that the *Israelites* were not absolutely commanded to destroy all the Inhabitants of the Nations, whose Lands God had given them for an Inheritance, Vol. 3. Book 12. p. 372, &c. But I cannot concur in this Opinion

Power, if they had intended it, and much less as they had been over-reached by Fraud, to have repealed

pinion for many Reasons. In the first Place, no Texts can be more full than those which in express Words prescribe the entire Extirpation of those Nations, such as *Exod.* xxiii. 32, 33. xxxiv. 12. *Numb.* xxxiii. 52, 53. *Deut.* vii. 1, 2. Again, the utter Excision of these Nations was the very Intent of the Commission given to the *Jews*. They were now ripe for Vengeance, and the *Israelites* were appointed as the Instruments of it. Their Day of Trial was past, and there was therefore no Room for Mercy, *Gen.* xv. 16. *Deut.* ix. 5. Again, had they offered Peace upon Submission, the *Gibeonites* would not have taken to this fraudulent Method; for it is plain by their own Confession, that they had nothing in View from the first, but saving their Lives, which might have been secured more honourably, if such publick Offers had been first made to these Nations before they attacked them. The *Gibeonites*, expressly acknowledge their divine Commission, and must therefore, if any, have been within the Terms of Peace, *Josh.* ix. 24.—The Grounds assigned by this worthy Author for his Opinion, are first, that Passage, *Deut.* xx. 10, 11, &c. But the Distinction in this Passage was not, as he represents it, that the Women and Children and Cattle might be saved, of those who refused the Offer of Peace, if they were remote Cities, and belonged not to their Inheritance, whereas those of the *Canaanites*, &c. were to be utterly destroyed, as soon as they were conquered after such Refusal; but the Difference was, that the Terms of Peace might be proposed to the former, but were not at all to be allowed to the latter. The 15th Verse relates to the whole Passage in the five preceding ones, concerning the Allowance of Life to *All* of those remote Cities, who would accept it upon Conditions, and to *some*, namely to Females and Infants, even after a Victory over them. *Thus shalt thou do unto all the Cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the Cities of these Nations.* And then it follows, *But of the Cities of these People, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an Inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth. But thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely the Hittites, &c. as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee:* To which the very Reason is added, lest an Intermixture with any of these People should gradually lead them into any of their idolatrous Practices; *That they teach you not to do after all their Abominations, which they have done unto their Gods, so should ye sin against the Lord your God.* There is not, I think, a stronger Proof of their being

pealed the Law of their Maker? The Contract they might have urged was void in itself, as being antecedently

ing bound to extirpate them than this very Passage.—— It is added however, that the other “ Meaning of this Direction “ of *Moses*, is confirmed from a Remark of *Joshua*’s. He observes, that as God had purposed to destroy the Nations of “ *Canaan*, so he did not dispose any of them to accept of “ Peace from the *Israelites*, in order to their Preservation.” *Josh. xi. 19.* This divine Purpose then of their utter Extirpation, is a strong Presumption that no such Terms were to be offered, which were to be so universally ineffectual; and especially, as the only People who had Conditions from them, obtained them, we know, by Fraud. Nor does *Joshua*’s Remark, that *it was of the Lord to harden their Hearts, that they should come against Israel in Battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no Favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses*, at all imply that they had refused previous Terms of Mercy. There was another Method which this Author had just before alluded to, by which they might have preserved themselves, tho’ no such Conditions had been offered, and might have saved their Lives by quitting their Country. (*Qui fugam mallent, aufugerent.—Unde Girgesæi credentes in Deum O. M. aufugerunt in Africam se conferentes. Gem. Hieros.*) But continual Tokens of a divine Interposition in favour of the *Israelites* had no Effect upon them. They were hardened against the utmost Evidence, which Obduration of Heart proved the Means of their Destruction.—But the Stress of this Observation of *Joshua* lies, I apprehend, in that Circumstance, *that they should come against Israel to Battle.* The sacred Historian had in this and the preceding Chapter been relating their Combinations against the Children of *Israel*. They were so far from studying, like the *Gibeonites*, to obtain Peace from them on any Terms, that they sent to each other to join their Forces to stop their Progress; which Method, as *Joshua* observes, hastened their own Ruin. They waited not till the *Israelites* came to War against them in their respective Situations, but they came out themselves to offer Battle to the *Israelites*, by which Means their Conquests were speedier than otherwise they could have been, and the Destruction of the Nations more compleat and less gradual than if they had kept merely on the Defensive. And even in the Conclusion of this very Text, there is express Reference to the general Injunction for their Extirpation, *that he might destroy them utterly, as the Lord commanded Moses.*—Neither would the After-Distinctions of destroying

antecedently prohibited by the supreme Lawgiver ; and that tho' they must repent of their rash Oath, yet that they durst not sin against the Lord by keeping it. But they had other Notions. Tho' they ought not to have made this Covenant, yet since it was confirmed by an Oath, they thought themselves bound to observe it, even in Opposition to a Precept, which without this Circumstance would confessedly have been binding ; and tho' *the Congregation murmured against the Princes, yet all the Princes said unto all the Congregation, we have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel, now therefore we may not touch them*, Josh. ix. 19. Their Oath they thought more binding than any single Precept, and that they judged right herein, the Event proved beyond Dispute ; for when *Saul* attempted afterwards to violate this Oath, and *in his Zeal to the Children of Israel and Judah sought to slay the Gibeonites*, it was esteemed a Crime that called for immediate Vengeance from Heaven, and a national Judgment ensued, 2 Sam. xxi. 1. — This is another Instance so much of the like Kind, wherein a rash Vow which was wrong in itself, was yet adjudged afterwards to be indispensably binding, and that where a public Consultation was expressly had upon the Case, that this, one would think, should much lessen the Astonishment of *Jephthah's* History, and obviate the most material Objections to it. The Exceptions which are usually made to it, would have been as applicable here, yet here they were over-ruled, and by the same

destroying them *after* and not *before* they had subdued them—of making them Tributaries in their *personal* and not in their *national* Capacity,—and of a *second* Treaty with the *Gibeonites*, bear Examination. I shall only add, that if the *Israelites* had really been directed to summon first each Town to surrender, and to offer Terms of Capitulation before they began the Assault, it would be surprizing that we should meet with no one Instance of their doing so, throughout the whole History, when their Conquest of so many Cities is so particularly related.

Authority

Authority and Course of Reasoning his Case is to be vindicated. That we have no other Examples public or private, of such unlawful Vows, which notwithstanding were fulfilled, seems a convincing Argument, that these had their proper Effect, and that their National Councils; and each particular Member, grew more cautious of the Use of such Oaths, when they found themselves at all Events obliged to keep them.

According to this Construction, the only faulty Part of *Jephthah's* Conduct appears to be his Rashness in making the Vow at first. He had Examples before him of great and good Men, who had made extraordinary Vows on particular Occasions, and had succeeded in them. He therefore, with the same good Intention, but without a due Regard to the Matter of his Vow, endeavours to exceed them all in the Importance of it; which Rashness was punished in its own Effects, he being obliged by this express Law to put it in Execution after it was made: And this seems a much more probable Method of accounting for it, than that continued Rashness, or rather perverse Obstinacy, to which Dr. *Edwards* * imputes it, who tho' he strenuously asserts and convincingly proves the Reality of the Fact, yet ascribes it to no more probable Cause, than a rash Attachment to his first Error, by which he refused to hearken to any Argument from any Authority, being resolutely bent to fulfil this promissory Oath. And had the Completion of it been any Way to his Interest or Satisfaction, or had it been a Point indifferent in itself, or had it been instantly put in Execution, before second Thoughts could take Place, this Supposition had been less improbable. But the Concern which must be supposed to arise on such an Event, the Grief which he actually expressed on the

* *Edwards* on difficult Texts, Vol. 1. p. 103.

Occasion, and the Interval which was petitioned and granted as a Respite of the Execution, are strong against the Notion of this his inflexible Resolution to destroy his Daughter and distress himself, in Opposition to all Application from and Arguments of the High Priest and Council. Rashness implies Suddenness and Want of Deliberation, which may easily be allowed in forming of the Vow, but cannot probably be supposed, where two Months intervened before the Performance of it. It is not likely that in all this Time, an Affair of so much Consequence, and of such publick Notoriety, should be neglected by those, whose Judgment was to determine Cases of this Nature, or that *Jephthab* should be unwilling to listen to a Proposition, which might save his Child and ease his Conscience. But if the Result of the Consultation of the Priests and Elders was to the same Purpose, if all the Princes of the Congregation determined in this Case as they did in the other before mentioned, that a Vow once made was indispensably to be observed, and their Sentence confirmed the Judgment of his first Thoughts on the Subject, that *he had opened his Mouth unto the Lord, and therefore might not go back*, then the whole Account is void of all Difficulty; and the whole Blame of this Action lay in the rash, well-meant, but ill-advised original Promise of such a Sacrifice. The literal Sense of that Precept, *Lev. xxvii. 28, 29.* which required the Performance of it, is strictly followed, its Reason illustrated, its Use vindicated, and the whole History rendered rational and consistent.

I shall now proceed to examine all the Objections which have been offered against the Opinion of a real Sacrifice.

The principal supposed Patron of the other Opinion, as being not only first in Time, but the first

in the Esteem of the learned World, of those Protestants of our own Country, who have argued against the Notion of *Jephthab's* sacrificing his Daughter, is Mr. *Selden*, and he is so continually referred to by all the Writers on this Subject, that from his known Abilities I expected the most poignant Arguments that Wit or Learning could suggest. But in Truth, the Patronage of his great Name seems to have been the Occasion of such frequent References to him, rather than the Weight of any Arguments alledged by him in this Point. His Performance * is rather an historical Account of each Opinion, with the Reasons of each, than a professed Determination in favour of either. He is at least as severe on the Grounds of the other Construction, where he judged them inconclusive, as on those of the received Interpretation, and scarce declares decisively his own Opinion in the Case. His Intent was not so much to disprove the Notion of *Jephthab's* sacrificing his Daughter, as to shew, that it was not warrantable for him by the *Jewish Law* so to do. It was pertinent indeed to this Point to take Notice of what had been said against the Fact, as well as to shew, that the Fact itself, if admitted, could not be justified. How far he has succeeded in this latter Part of the Argument, is another Question, which may be given up or defended, without affecting the Reality of this Sacrifice ; but as this was the Light in which he was considering it, he has really offered some Observations, which may serve to clear up the Point to those, who believe but condemn the Sacrifice. He has helped us to a probable Account of the Occasion of *Jephthab's* Error, by his Misapprehension of the usual Method of devoting their Enemies previous to the Engagement, and supposes that the annual Lamentation was in-

* De Jure Nat. & Gent. Lib. 4. Cap. 11. P. 492.

tended to prevent the like for the future. Against those who suppose, that he dedicated her to a re-
cluse State, he observes, that such a Vow would no
more have been binding than a Vow of Sacrifice;
and adds farther, that Parents had not so much as
the Power of dedicating them to religious Services;
obviating the Objection from the Instance of *Samuel*;
with a Reason very clear and conclusive †. What
he has taken Notice of as offered by others in sup-
port of the new Opinion of a Virgin State, will
best be considered in the Words of those, who
have advanced them as their own professed Senti-
ments.

I shall begin with those Objections, which are
urged by Sir *Thomas Brown*, who was one of the first
of our Countrymen, who engaged in the Opposition;
who in his Enquiries into *Vulgar Errors* ‡, has
placed this of *Jephthah's* Sacrifice of his Daughter
in the Number, and formed his Arguments against
it both from Scripture and Reason. The former
have been obviated already in the View of the Hi-
story; but I shall just mention them, in order to
subjoin some brief Strictures on them.

And, first, he observes, that, “ It is evident
“ that she deplored her Virginity, and not her
“ Death.” From whence he leaves it to be infer-
red, that not a formidable Death, but a Virgin-
State of Life was her Portion; whereas this Con-
sequence is very foreign from the Observation. Her
Virginity was equally to be deplored on both Sup-
positions, or if not equally, then rather more, if
she died, than if she lived a Virgin. This compli-
cated Misfortune must be the more afflictive, and

† Ipse Levita erat, atque eo nomine & a natalibus Domino
sacer atque ipse libenter matris votum sacra ministeria præstan-
do solvit.

‡ Book v. Chap. 14. p. 295.

she had greater Reason to lament her Want of Offspring, if she was immediately sacrificed, than if she had herself survived to comfort her afflicted Father. A very acute Writer gives this Reflection another Turn *, and retorts the Observation upon the Objector. Instead of concluding from her bewailing her Virginity, that that was the only penal Consequence of her Father's Vow, he infers the very contrary, that that was not the Intent of it, since Vows were to be fulfilled with a ready and cheerful Mind, that therefore she was perfectly resigned as to the Loss of her Life by Sacrifice, but was more at Liberty to lament this unhappy Circumstance attending it, that she was deprived thereby of all Hopes of Posterity. And I cannot but think there is something very substantial and significant in this Remark.

The second scriptural Objection offered by this Author is, that, " When it is said, that *Jephthah* " did unto her according unto his Vow, it is immediately subjoined, *and she knew no Man*, which " as immediate in Words, was probably most near " in Sense unto the Vow." This is rather a Repetition of the former Objection in other Words, than any new and distinct Exception. Accordingly the Answer must here be repeated, that this Circumstance of her remaining a Virgin was as proper to be mentioned according to this Interpretation as the other; and I have before offered a particular Reason, why the sacred Historian adds this Observation in this Place, immediately after mentioning the Execution of the Vow upon her. The *Italian*

* Facile responderetur, ideo non vovisse quia desievit. Vota enim libenter Animo solvenda: Vita igitur sine luctu oblata est, quæ in Voto fuit. Quod, sine liberis Virgo vitam deponeret, id illi molestum fuit; mortemque fecit acerbiorẽ. *Robinsoni Annales Mundi*, Lib. ix. p. 519.

Translation very suitably renders it, *and she had known no Man*, which was the full Purport of the Remark here made, and not only obviates any Exception, but renders the History more clear and intelligible.

The only remaining Objection urged by this Author from the Text, is from the Meaning of the Word, which we translate *to lament*. "It is said in the Text," says he, "that the Daughters of *Israel* went yearly to talk with the Daughter of *Jephthab* four Days in the Year, which had she been sacrificed they could not have done." But this Point has likewise been already considered. It was observed, that allowing the Word to signify *Discouraging*, it would not follow, that they discouraged *with* her, but *of* her; and that he is sufficiently answered on this Argument by the Testimony of those who were of his own Opinion as to the Fact.

From Scripture he proceeds to Arguments from Reason. And first, he observes, that "the Offering of Mankind was against the Law of God,"—This indeed will be thought an Argument of great Weight against the Equity, but noways affects the Reality of the Fact. It may pass as a Proof, that he ought not to have done it, but certainly cannot determine the Question whether he did or no. Besides, tho' the general Principle of the Prohibition of human Sacrifices be readily allowed, yet it must be great Ignorance of or Disregard to this Levitical Law to pass it by without any Notice, when it is the very Foundation of the present Difficulty.—But he adds, that "tho' he (*Jephthab*) had pursued it, it is not probable the Priests and Wisdom of *Israel* would have permitted it." Now this Improbability must proceed upon three Suppositions, neither of which will appear absolutely unquestionable—that it was their Duty to have prevented it—that

that they would not fail to endeavour to do their Duty—and that it was entirely in their Power to have made their Endeavours effectual.—The whole Course of Argument, which we have been reviewing, may shew, that the first of these was not so indisputable; the Corruptions, which have been noted as prevailing in the *Jewish* Nation at that Time, will lessen our Security of the second, and the Authority which *Jephthab* had by Contract reserved to himself, will almost intitle us to pronounce against the last. The High Priest and great Council might, for Reasons before given, be of his own Opinion, that his Vow was irrevocable, if not, they might not be so active, as they should have been, in Opposition to his Opinion, as being less interested in the Preservation of his Daughter than himself; or had they really endeavoured to prevent it, yet as he was now their Head and Governor, he might not be liable to be controuled by his own Subjects. The same Answer would be sufficient to the other Part of the Difficulty proposed, that they would not have permitted it, “not only in regard of the
 “ Subject or Sacrifice itself, but also the Sacrificator,
 “ which the Picture makes to be *Jephthab*, who was
 “ neither Priest, nor capable of that Office, &c.”

Allowing the whole Force of what is here intended, it might not be in their Power to help what they did not approve, nor to prevent his Encroachment upon their Function, if he did it. But we are not at all obliged to defend the Notion of *Jephthab*'s sacrificing her with his own Hands. The Painter's Fancy is at Liberty, but it is not asserted in Scripture. It is only said, that *he did with her according to his Vow*, and numberless Instances may be given from the sacred Writings of Persons, who are much more expressly said to have done those Things, which were done by their Orders, and executed by their Instruments; and it is a common Way of

speaking in use amongst all Mankind. Dr. *Edwards* indeed embraces the Notion of his really performing the dreadful Office in his own Person*, still ascribing it to his rash Obstinacy and resolute Attachment to the literal Form of his Vow; but this is a very distinct Question from that of her being sacrificed at all, and we are no way concerned either in the Difficulty or the Solution of it.

The next Objection is, that “ The offering up
“ of his Daughter was not only unlawful, &c. but
“ had been a Course that had much entrenched
“ upon his Discretion; that is, to have punished
“ himself in the strictest Observance of his Vow,
“ when as the Law of God had allowed an Evasion,
“ that is, by way of Commutation or Redemption,
“ according as is determined, *Lev. xxvii.*” But
why not a Word again of that particular Law,
which is to be found in that very Chapter here
referred to, which prohibits the Redemption of
a devoted Person, and requires, that *He shall surely
be put to Death?* The *Evasion*, as he calls it, by
way of Commutation or Redemption, was for
those who were dedicated to living Services; but no
such Commutation was allowed for those who were
devoted to Destruction by private Persons, who
were to be careful how they made such Vows, since
the Execution of them was indispensably required:
If this be not the Meaning of that Law, it ought
to be proved, and not overlooked; and it ought
likewise to be proved, that the *Jews* did not so un-
derstand it, otherwise this might occasion a Diffi-
culty amongst them, which may account for this
Fact, if not justify it. *Jephtah*, I doubt not,
would have thanked these Casuists who are so
ready to absolve him from his Vow, and to tell us,
how he might have been excused from the Per-

* *Edwards* on difficult Texts, Vol. I. P. 102.

Performance of it; but what Grounds are there to
 charge him with such unaccountable Ignorance or
 Neglect, as that he did not know the Law of Re-
 demption, or did not regard it? How justly might
 he have retorted the Accusation upon those, who
 should thus have directed him, in their passing by
 in Silence that very Law which was the Ground of
 his Scruples, and which in Appearance at least
 was very express for the Discharge of his Vow by
 the Sacrifice of his Daughter.---However, this Men-
 tion of the general Appointment of a Commutation
 leads him to introduce a Passage in prophane Histo-
 ry, which affords a strong presumptive Argument
 against the Opinion, which it is brought to favour.
 “ And therefore, says he, their Conceit is not to
 “ be exploded, who say that from the Story of
 “ *Jephthah* sacrificing his own Daughter, might
 “ spring the Fable of *Agamemnon* delivering unto
 “ Sacrifice his Daughter *Iphigenia*, who was also
 “ Contemporary unto *Jephthah*, wherein to answer
 “ the Ground that hinted it. *Iphigenia* was not
 “ sacrificed herself, but redeemed with an Hart,
 “ which *Diana* accepted for her.” If this Conceit,
 as he confesses, is not to be exploded, it is of great
 Weight for the Reality of *Jephthah*’s sacrificing his
 Daughter. It may strongly be urged, that our
 Meeting with such a Parallel Story in Heathen Au-
 thors dated about the same Time, is a Circumstance
 which much confirms this Notion; for if it was bor-
 rowed from hence, it must argue the Reality of the
 Fact from whence it was borrowed. Many of our
 best Writers have professedly undertaken the Argu-
 ment, and shewn how the Heathen Mythology was
 a Corruption of Scripture History, and it is very
 remarkable that there should at the same Period of
 Time be an Account in their Poets of a great Gene-
 ral and Governor giving up his Daughter to Sacri-
 fice, when the Bible gives us the same Relation in

the Story of *Jephthab*. As to his Remark by which he intended to evade the Consequence, that *Iphigenia* was not finally sacrificed, but redeemed with a Hart, he ought in the first Place to have been so fair as to have told us, That the Poets are divided in their Account, and that some expressly assure us, that she was actually sacrificed *; and then we have as good Authority to embrace that Side of the Question as the other, and may argue very strongly from his own Concession, that this Account might spring from the Story of *Jephthab*. But suppose, that all the Heathen Writers had been unanimous in their Account of the Redemption and Preservation of *Iphigenia*, yet that she was devoted as a Sacrifice is the great Point to be considered. They were not always exact in retaining every Circumstance. Some Corruptions of their own are mixed in every Instance which they borrowed from the Sacred History: It is enough that the principal Article was preserved. And if the devoting a Daughter to Destruction by a mighty Prince and General was from *Jephthab* ascribed to *Agamemnon*, then whatever was the Event in the Prophane History, yet we are assured of the Completion in the Sacred Story; for it is expressly said, *And he did with her according to his Vow*.---The very Circumstance of devoting the first Person of his Family that he met with in his Return, if he returned with Success, and the Accident of its falling on his own Child, is preserved likewise by the Heathen Historians in the Person of *Idomeneus*; and though here again the

* Sanguine placatis ventos et virgine caesa.

Virg. Æneid, Lib. II.

Hoc juvene amisso classem non solvit Atrides,

Pro quâ mactata est Iphigenia morâ.

Propert. Lib. III.

Triviai virginis Aram

Iphianassai rurparunt sanguine sædè

Dyctores Danaum

Lucret. Lib. I.

Event

Event was very different, yet his own peremptory Resolution to fulfil his Vow and sacrifice his Child, is remarkably related ; which is a strong Confirmation, that it was a Corruption of *Jephthab's* History, and is easy to be reconciled on that Supposition, but is utterly unaccountable on any other. This Person is likewise acknowledged to be Cotemporary with *Jephthab*, and that such similar Circumstances should be found in their History, is a great Presumption, that the real Character of the one was fabulously applied to the other ; and upon the Acknowledgment of that, is a farther Evidence that this Passage of Holy Scripture is to be understood of a real Sacrifice, since the Heathens thus understood the Vows of their Heroes, though they varied in their Account of the Event. If *Jephthab* did indeed thus devote his Daughter, and offer her up as a Burnt-Offering, it was probable some such Remembrance of it would be preserved with many Corruptions, as in other like Instances, in Profane History ; and that we meet with such Accounts is a strong Evidence of the Meaning of that original Fact from which they were derived. Whereas if *Jephthab* did no more, and meant no more than to dedicate his Daughter to a single Life, then these Accounts of Persons, whose Children were designed at least for Destruction, could not take their Rise from hence, though this Author allows that they did ; nor could they have any Foundation in any other Part of Scripture, but were absolutely groundless and fictitious. Yet these are Accounts of such a Nature, as are altogether improbable to be an entire Fiction, and can be accounted for only by such a supposed Corruption of some real History.

The only remaining Objection of this Author is, that " Although his Vow run generally for the " Words, *whatsoever shall come forth, &c.* yet it " might be restrained in the Sense ; for whatsoever
 " was

“ was sacrificable, and justly subject to lawful Immolation---Nor was he obliged, says he, by Oath unto a strict Observation of that which promissorily was unlawful; or could he be qualified by Vow to commit a Fact, which naturally was abominable.” This coincides with the former Objection of the Iniquity of such a Parricide, and is an Argument not against the Fact, but the Legality of it. Whereas he might be guilty of this Sin, though we esteem it so exceeding sinful, and the Generality of those who suppose he did it, condemn his doing it.--And as Arguments of Unlawfulness will not disprove the Fact, so even as to the Position here advanced, that he was not obliged to fulfil an unlawful Promise, though no Christian will be disposed to dispute this Principle, yet whether this was the Notion of the *Jews*, is another Point, which ought not to be presumed without Proof, and which I think has been disproved. Or if it be but a doubtful Point, it overthrows the Foundation of this Casuistry, and consequently the Force of this Objection, even against the supposed Abominableness of the Fact.--He concludes with the usual Observation on the different Senses of the Particle, which is used in the Vow as admitting either a disjunctive or copulative Sense, but this was at large considered in its Place.

The Author next to be considered is Mr. *Howell**, who is very earnest against the Opinion of a Sacrifice, and introduces his Exceptions with a very rhetorical Declamation, being, as must be allowed, very strong in his Expressions, however weak and inconclusive in his Arguments. He enters thus on his Subject: “ No body can read *Jephthah's* Vow and the Execution of it, as most Translations express and represent it, without Horror and A-

* Hist. of the Bible, Vol. I. Book IV. P. 323.

“ mazement.

“ magement. To find a Man, and that not a
 “ wild *Barbarian* but an *Israelite*, offering in Burnt-
 “ offering a young Innocent, and no Doubt beau-
 “ tiful and virtuous Maid ; to find an indulgent
 “ fond Father burning the Fruit of his Body, his
 “ own Child, nay, and his dutiful and obedient
 “ Child too, the Object of his Hopes and present
 “ Comfort ; to find him, whom the Apostle lists
 “ in the Catalogue of the most pious and faithful
 “ Worthies of the Old Testament, vowing to of-
 “ fer a human Sacrifice to God at the very Time in
 “ which the Scripture says, The Spirit of the Lord
 “ was upon him, and putting his Vow afterwards
 “ in Execution, though human Sacrifices were hate-
 “ ful to the Lord — I say, to find all this is very
 “ puzzling and unaccountable.” This Representa-
 tion of the Difficulties attending the received Op-
 nion is, indeed, patherical and plausible, yet I apprehend the intelligent Reader, from the foregoing View of the Case, will easily obviate the whole of its Force, clear up this *puzzling* Supposition, and account for all, which is here esteemed *unaccountable*. The Horror here represented will much abate, when we consider that though he offered up *his own, his dutiful and obedient Child*, yet it was upon a firm Opinion, whether right or wrong, that he was bound to do it, and with all the Regret and Concern, which could be supposed to attend an indulgent Parent in such a Case ; that he was not wilfully guilty of a horrid Parricide, and in Sport or Resentment trifled away the Life of an innocent Daughter, but only offered up a Sacrifice, which he thought he indispensably owed to his Maker, at the Expence of his nearest and dearest Relation. He was guilty, we confess, of a rash Vow, which is no such uncommon Case ; but the Execution of it was founded on a sincere Persuasion, that nothing could release him from it. This is not barely implied, but particularly expressed
 in

in the History, and strong Evidences have been offered to shew, that according to the Notions of the *Jews*, he was not mistaken in his Judgment. --- There are however two Suggestions here offered by this Writer, which look something like Arguments against this Interpretation, and therefore I shall particularly consider them.

The first is, that one, "whom the Apostle lists
 " in the Catalogue of the most pious and faithful
 " Worthies of the Old Testament cannot be supposed even to vow to offer a human Sacrifice to
 " God." Are then the Characters of all the others, whom the Apostle in that Passage celebrates, unexceptionable in every Instance, from whence we may draw a probable Argument in favour of *Jephthah*? If none of them ever transgressed, not even so much as in a Case of Rashness, the Presumption might seem strong, that this our Hero might be acquitted likewise. But now it is remarkable, that most of those mentioned in this Testimony with *Jephthah*, had some Blot in their Character; from whence, if any Conjecture was to be formed of this Point at all, it would rather conclude for his Commission of this Iniquity in making such a rash and wrong Vow. The idolatrous *Ephod* of *Gideon*, the irregular Love, Prevarication and Folly of *Sampson*, the Murder and Adultery of *David*, might all be disproved by the same Method of Argument, because they are mentioned with Honour in the List of ancient Worthies, by the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. But the Truth is, that Author did not intend hereby to justify or excuse every particular Action of their Lives. He introduces the Mention of them upon the Subject of Faith, considers them as acting upon that Principle, and in virtue of it becoming great Instruments of Providence for the Good of Mankind in general, and their own Nation in particular. In this View the Testimony is most true and pertinent,
 but

but cannot therefore invalidate the History of some faulty Steps in other Parts of their Conduct. Characters are, as they ought to be, taken from the general Course of a Man's Life; and there are many, who, like these Worthies here mentioned, are found in their Faith, and habitually regular in their Practice, who yet are not without some Blemishes in particular Instances. Yet any Historian would be justified in the Commendation of such Persons; and if none were to be mentioned with Honour, but such as had never been guilty of a rash Action, there must be an End of all Praise and Esteem in the World. These Heroes celebrated in this Epistle were great and successful Commanders, raised up by God for the Support of his People, and were likewise in the Main good and well-disposed Persons; but all this does neither express or imply, that there is no blameable Circumstance in their whole History. Dr. *Lightfoot* signifies*, that he might be numbered amongst the Faithful on Account of his Repentance, but I know of no Authority for any such Suggestion. It is certain, indeed, that he repented of making this Vow, but that he repented of keeping it, is no where said or intimated. He might indeed repent of this likewise amongst his Sins of Ignorance, (as we have all great Reason to pray to be cleansed from our secret Faults) but that he ever really changed his Mind as to the Unalterableness of his Vow, we have no Reason to believe, or to suppose. Neither ought it to be omitted, that some of the primitive Fathers went so far into the contrary Opinion, that they thought *Jephthah* was here placed in the Number of the Faithful on this very Account, for his Fidelity in performing this Vow. And it is certain that supposing his Error herein to be never so grievous, yet his punctual Discharge of

* Sermon on *Judges* xi. 39. Vol. II. P. 1217.

that

that which was most disagreeable to Flesh and Blood, upon a religious Principle, his fulfilling what he thought himself obliged to fulfil, though against his own Inclination, was highly commendable, and might not improperly entitle him to the Character of Faithfulness*. At least, if it be not the very Foundation of such a Commendation, it is not inconsistent with it; but such a general Testimony would not disprove a particular Fault, if it had been wilful, much less such an one as at most proceeded only from an erroneous Conscience. The Character of *Jephthah* appears throughout to have been truly religious. As soon as he had accepted this Commission, he uttered all his Words before the Lord in Mizpeh, that is, "in a solemn Address of Prayer he laid before God all that he had said to the *Gileadites*, desiring likely God's Approbation and Direction, &c.†" He then endeavoured to prevent the Effusion of Blood in War by an amicable and honourable Address to the *Ammonites*, and therein like a Person of Prudence and Piety justifies the Lawfulness of the Cause he was engaging in. When this proved ineffectual, he again applies to Heaven by this very Engagement we are considering, in which his good Intention, if not his good Judgment, is to be justified. He meant well in making his Vow, though he did not enough consider the Subject of it, and he meant well in the executing it, believing it now indispensable, however he regretted his first offering it.

* Whoever looks into the Catalogue of the Worthies, whom the Author to the *Hebrews* enumerates, will soon perceive, that as he is far from being exact in the Order, wherein he places them, so by the Faith for which he commends them, he means no more than a Belief of what God told them, and ready Obedience to his Commands, whenever they were signified to them by a proper Authority.

Stackhouse's Hist. of the Bible, Vol. I. P. 981.

† *Wells's Paraphrase on the Place.*

The

The other Objection of this Author is, that he could not be supposed to vow to offer a human Sacrifice "at the very Time in which the Scripture says, *The Spirit of the Lord was upon him.*" And had this Objection come from any other Person than one, who had so frequent Occasion to consider the Import of the sacred Phrases, and has so well compiled the Sacred History, it had been less unaccountable. The Operations of the Spirit, as the Scripture expressly tells us, are various, and the highest Degrees of it were not intended to make Men invincible; no, nor infallible neither, except in a particular Gift for a particular Use; and even then not reaching to every Part of private Conduct. The Spirit of the Lord, which is here said to come upon *Jephthab*, was undoubtedly a Spirit of Valour and Fortitude, suitable to the Employment he was undertaking, and did not imply an Immunity from all Error. Nor is this an arbitrary Evasion and unsupported Assertion, but there are several parallel Passages to justify it. The Spirit of God is said to come upon *Saul* for this very Purpose, 1 *Sam.* xi. 6. and again upon *Sampson*, *Judges* xv. 14. when he brake the Cords that were upon him like burnt Flax, and did such Execution with the Jaw-Bone of an Ass. Yet were neither of their Characters unexceptionable; and many other like Instances might be given. The Spirit of the Lord came on many Persons for particular Services, when his Providence rais'd them up as Instruments of Blessing to their own People, or of Vengeance on others, when yet those Persons were in other Respects neither free from Error or Vice*. *Naaman* was an Idolater,

* Etiam per ipsum Saulum, omnimodo reprobatum, multa Deus populo suo præstitit, in quem insilivit etiam spiritus Dei, et prophetavit, non cum juste ageret, sed cum in Virum sanctum David innocentemque sæviret; agit enim spiritus Domini, et per bonos, et per malos, et per scientes, et per nescientes quod agendum novit et statuit. *Augustin. Quæst. in Jud. Lib. VII.*

yet *by him the Lord had given Deliverance unto Syria.* The Spirit of the Lord in all such Instances is plainly a Spirit of Courage and Might, not of Piety and unspotted Innocence. But the Stress is laid on the Improbability of such an unjustifiable Vow "at the very Time that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him." Now supposing the Case to be rightly stated, a Man might be inspired with an extraordinary Degree of Fortitude to take Vengeance on his Enemies, and yet be left to his own Conduct of himself, without any supernatural Portion of Grace, in Affairs, which only touched Conscience. But neither is the Foundation itself of this Difficulty to be granted. It does not appear, that this Vow was made at the same Time that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. It is not said, That the Spirit came upon him and he vowed a Vow; but *the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the Children of Ammon.* The Sentences are very distinct. His speedy Progress was owing to the Spirit given him, but his Vow was of his own Motion. And yet even this, as before observed, was well intended: so that nothing can be inferred merely from this Circumstance against the Notion of a Sacrifice; and I shall make a farther Observation on it presently, when I come to take Notice of the Repetition of this Objection from another Hand. There is nothing farther in this Author, but what has already been obviated in the View of the History, such as his Evasion of the Testimony of the Ancients, and the different Translation of some particular Words in the Account, which need not here be repeated.

Dr. *Jenkin* is the next in Order of Time, who has opposed the received Interpretation†. He has

† Reasonableness, &c. of the Christian Religion, Vol. II. N. 18. p. 334.

been so fair indeed, as to give us an Account of some of the Grounds, on which those who believe that *Jephthah* sacrificed his Daughter, endeavour to account for it ; and after all, only determines, that the other Opinion is most probable. Such Remarks as were peculiar to him, fell of course into the Examination of the scriptural Account of it. I shall only here add a Remark on his concluding Sentence, wherein he says, “ No Commentator has “ ever determined it to be consonant to the Law, “ that he should offer such a Sacrifice, but all agree “ that it was directly contrary to it.” Had this been said abstractedly from the Consideration of his Vow, it might readily have been allowed ; or had it been said, that all agree, that he ought not to have made such a Vow, this had been equally true ; but whether he ought not to have fulfilled the Vow when made, is another Point, which is not so universally agreed ; wherein, as I have shewn, wise Men have differed, and where plausible Reasons at least are offered on both Sides.

The next Author to be examined is one, from whom I unwillingly differ in any the minutest Point, whose Memory I honour, and which will ever be honoured by every Friend to real Christianity, whilst its most distinguishing and important Doctrines are truly valued ; I mean that great and good Man, the late learned Dr. *Waterland*. He has likewise embraced the new Construction of this Vow*, not as certain, but *most probable*, and has adopted not the Arguments only, but the Words also of Mr. *Bedford* on this Subject, which run thus :

“ 1. If he had sacrificed her, the Scripture “ would without doubt have censured it as a very

* Scripture vindicated, Part II. P. 85.

“wicked and inhuman Act.” This is taking two Points for granted, which will not readily be allowed, that it was such a very wicked and inhuman Act, and that therefore the Scripture would have censured it as such: the former of which, as the Case was circumstantiated, is doubtful, and the latter absolutely groundless. It is allowed, that human Sacrifices in themselves were unlawful, and shocking to human Nature, but for that very Reason it might be dispensed with in one Instance, to impress very strongly the indispensable Observance of Vows, to prevent the rash Making, and the rash Violation of them. At least, this the Law seemed to require; and it is not just, when *Jephthah* was under this solemn Engagement, to state the Case, and argue from it, as if no Difficulty had arisen from hence; but he had only been bound by the general Precept against human Sacrifices.---But suppose it certainly wicked and inhuman, without any Pretence to justify or excuse it, yet is the Argument groundless, that then the Scripture would without doubt have censured it as such. Those sacred Writings are usually very brief in their Account, and relate many Facts without Censure or Applause, leaving us to judge from the Rules of Right and Wrong, which are elsewhere given us, whether such Facts were blameable or commendable*. It was their Design to give us a short History of the Beginning of the World, and of the *Jewish* Nation in particular, and not to write Comments on every Character, much less on every Action of each particular Person. There are many other Facts therein related, which we know to be criminal, though the Scripture has no where pronounced them to be so.

* Neque approbavit hoc Scriptura, neque reprobavit, sed justitia et lege Dei consultâ æstimandum, pensandumque dimisit.

Augustin. Quæst. in Jud. Lib. vii. p. 612.

The Intemperance of *Noah*, the Incest of *Lot* and of *Judah*, have no express Mark of Censure affixed on them by the inspired Writer, yet no one will therefore deny them, or defend them; but all such Practices are easy to be judged of by the least Degree of Common Sense, under the general Principles of Religion, without such particular Determinations and Marks fixed on them by the supreme Authority.

The second Objection is, "In such a Case he would not have let her go up and down upon the Mountains for two Months; for he might suppose, that she would never return, and then he could not have done as he vowed." This Difficulty, if it be any, is however equally applicable to every Interpretation of this Vow. She might have evaded the Penalty whatever it was, by going off, but she had very readily submitted to comply with it, and he had no Doubt or Distrust of her. Had he intended her only for a single Life, she might (if we are at Liberty to put all possible Suppositions) have taken this Opportunity to defeat his Intent, and to entitle herself to some Hopes of Posterity; but there was no Reason to suspect her not returning, or doing any thing unworthy of her general good Character. And unless we knew what particular Mountains were chosen by her, or allotted by her Father for this Purpose, that her Flight was practicable, is not so certain. Indeed this Circumstance of his allowing her two Months Liberty to bewail her Fate, is so far from an Objection, that it is, as I have before urged it, an additional Proof of the Truth of it. If her Fate was so severe, it was very likely both that it should be asked and granted, that she might lament so extraordinary a Misfortune in so eminent a Manner; but on any other Supposition this solemn Lamentation was unworthy the Occasion,

sion, and inconsistent both with the Nature of the ensuing Misfortune, and the Liberty afterwards supposed to be indulged her of receiving Visits from her Companions.

The third Objection is, " If she had gone upon the Mountains, it would have been to bewail her untimely End ; whereas all that she proposed to bewail was, her Virginity." The Reason of this has several Times been assigned. Her's was a complicated Case ; she was now to loose her Life ; and that before she had any Offspring herself. This Circumstance she chooses, with a Dutiffulness consistent with her whole Carriage, to insist on as most decent in her Situation ; that she might not reflect on her Father for his Rashness, nor contradict that which was expressly the Subject Matter of his Vow ; but laments this only, which was an incidental Consequence : and why this was so lamentable, might have been collected, if we had been at a Loss, from that which is here used as

A fourth Objection, that " the sacred Story seems to favour this Interpretation ; that at the End of two Months she returned to her Father, who did with her according to his Vow ; the Consequence of which is immediately added, *and she knew no Man.* This was a great Trouble to *Jephthah*, because by this Means his Family was extinct, and he had no Issue to inherit his Estate, and keep his Name in Remembrance." This then was the Reason why she chose likewise to mention and bewail this unhappy Consequence of her untimely End, rather than that unfortunate End itself. She does not appear to have been afraid of Death itself, but was concerned that she should leave no Posterity according to the known Zeal of that Nation in this Particular ; and therefore lamented not her speedy and violent Destruction, but her Want of

Issue.

Unc. She might contentedly resign a Life, which would e'er long fail of itself, to the Service of God, and the Benefit of her Country, and yet might grieve that she had not first lived to encrease her Family, and leave them some Hope of producing the wished-for Messiah; and therefore the Circumstance which is added, of her *knowing no Man*, was very proper to be added; that she died with her Virgin Honours, and put an End to her Father's House; not that she continued to live a Virgin, which one would naturally expect to have had here plainly expressed, if it had been the Case.

There is yet one peculiar Evasion of the Evidence of this Sacrifice from the sacred Writings, offered by the Author of an useful Paraphrase upon several Parts of the Bible, I mean Mr. *Pyle**. He tells us first, "He has so worded the Passage, as to leave Room for the Reader's Opinion on either Side of the Question:" tho' this I think would never have been found out from the following Paraphrase. "Upon his first March *Jephthab* makes a solemn Vow to God, that if he returned victorious from the Battle, he would dedicate the first living Creature that he met at his House, as an Offering to his Service, making it a Burnt-sacrifice, if it were a Beast proper and allowable for such Service, or entirely consecrating it to his Worship, if it were of human Kind." But this now is the very Distinction which they make, who oppose the Notion of a Sacrifice, which is never admitted by those who maintain it, and therefore not reconcileable to either Side of the Question. Nor is the Paraphrase just in itself on several Accounts. *Jephthab* did not say, that he would dedicate what he first met at his House, which might have been a

* Paraphrase on the Old Test. Vol. III. P. 191.

sacrificable Animal, but what *first come forth of the Doors of his House to meet him*, which must be a rational Being capable of forming such a Design ;--- nor did he say, the first living Creature, or *whatsoever*, but *whosoever*, confining his Vow expressly to a Human Person ; neither is there any Intimation of a different Disposal of it, according as it was proper and allowable for such Service, but the Vow is unconditional, peremptory, and absolute. This Paraphrase indeed, however unjustifiable, would have been very consistent in a professed Opposition to *Jephthab's* Sacrifice of his Daughter, but is by no Means reconcileable with the propos'd Neutrality in the Question.--- But the peculiar Argument, before alluded to, is added in the Notes in the following Words. “ I shall only further observe, that without the Help of the fore-mentioned Distinction, we may easily account for the Phrase of a Burnt-offering with respect to *Jephthab's* Daughter ; 'tis a Phrase very often in Scripture used in a figurative Sense. And as Prayers and Thanksgivings are called Sacrifices and Offerings, and sometimes Calves of our Lips and Holocausts, so there is no Reason why it may not most easily be understood thus figuratively of Persons as well as Things.” This, indeed, is striking at the Foundation of the Opinion, and is like cutting the Knot, which could not be untied. *Jephthab's* Vow, it seems, was metaphorical, and the Sacrifice intended was only figurative, that is, in reality no Sacrifice at all. Suppose therefore an Ox, or other sacrificable Animal had happened first to meet him, it might have been metaphorically sacrificed by being employ'd in drawing Burdens, or such like Use, for the Service of the Sanctuary ; and this might have been justified by the Expressions used in the Vow. To support this Opinion however, it is said, that “ Sacrifices
“ and

“and Burnt-Offerings is a Phrase often used in
 “Scripture, in a figurative Sense, and therefore
 “there is no Reason why it may not most easily be
 “understood thus figuratively of Persons as well as
 “Things.” But neither the Principle nor Inference
 will hold good upon Examination. It is not true,
 that this Term is figuratively used in Scripture. The
 general Expression of *Sacrifice* is sometimes so ap-
 plied, but the particular Term of Holocaust or Burnt-
 Offering is never used but in its plain literal
 Sense, when something was consumed by Fire in
 Sacrifice. Our Prayers and Thanksgivings are never
 once so stiled throughout the Scripture, as far as I can
 find upon a strict Enquiry; but had the contrary
 been true, as here asserted, how would this have
 weakened the literal Use of it in this Place? Why,
 “there is no Reason, it is said, why it may not
 “most easily be understood thus figuratively of Per-
 “sons as well as Things.” This, I think, is not
 expressed with the usual Accuracy and Perspicuity of
 this Author. For if by *Things* are figuratively meant
 Actions and Expressions of Devotion, like Prayers
 and Thanksgivings, there would be a plain Reason
 why the Term of Burnt-Offering could not as easily
 be understood figuratively of Persons as of these
 Things; because the former were liable to be
 consumed by Fire, which the latter were not. There
 could be no Danger, if our Devotions were stiled
 Burnt-Offerings, of any one’s understanding it
 in a literal Sense. They would know, that they
 were so stiled, only because they were offered up,
 like Sacrifices, in Honour of God, and in Testimo-
 ny of our Dependance upon him; whereas, if Per-
 sons were so stiled, and that not only when they
 presented themselves as a living Sacrifice, which be-
 ing an Act of Devotion, was, for the Reason now
 mentioned, an easy Figure of Speech, but when

others are said to offer them up for a Burnt-Offering, this would render all Language uncertain ; for, by the same Construction, the King of *Moab* may be acquitted of the Imputation of Parricide, and might only figuratively offer up his Son, 2 *Kings* iii. 27. But if by Things are meant any Things material, which are capable of being really burnt, as the Fruits of the Earth, then this Expression may as well be understood figuratively of Persons as of these : but the Truth is, it is never used of either. It is only so used where it cannot be mistaken, and is never applied in a metaphorical Sense; but where a literal one by the Nature of the Thing is excluded.

These are the principal Writers of our Nation, who had hitherto opposed the Notion of *Jephthah's* sacrificing his Daughter. There are others, whose Judgment it is no easy Matter to ascertain. The Authors of the *Atbenian* Oracle have expressly contradicted themselves by denying the Reality of the Sacrifice in one Place *, and in another †, not only admitting but justifying it. Mr. *Stackhouse* in his Body of Divinity ‡, has summed up the Evidence against the received Interpretation, but in his History of the Bible §, has better recollected himself, and allows, that the Arguments in favour of it do *preponderate*. Bishop *Patrick* mentions the Difficulties attending each Construction ¶, and scarce intimates his own Opinion in the Case ; and Dr. *Leland* ** looks on it as a Point that is ever likely to continue undetermined.—I proceed now to consider the Arguments of a Gentleman ††, who has lately undertaken peremptorily to determine it, whose Per-

* Vol. 2. p. 377.

† Vol. 3. p. 93.

‡ P. 460.

§ Vol. 1. p. 597. § Patrick's Paraphrase, Vol. 2. p. 148.

** Anfw. to Moral Phil. Vol. 1. p. 151.

†† Romaine's

Sermon, p. 2, 3.

formance gave Occasion to this Review of the Case.

And first he says, †, that “ *Jephthab* could not “ have sacrificed his Daughter, tho’ he had vowed “ to do it, because human Sacrifices were absolute- “ ly forbidden by the Law of *Moses*. And *Jeph-* “ *thab* knew this.”—From any Person who had not looked into the Foundation of this Controversy, one might have expected this general Objection ; but one who undertakes to prove a new Construction against the received Interpretation, ought neither to have been ignorant of this, nor to have concealed the Knowledge of it, that this is begging the Question in one of the most material Points of it. Human Sacrifices, it is allowed, were absolutely forbidden by the Law of *Moses*. It was therefore unlawful to vow them. When they were vowed, a new Question arises, whether the Vow itself was to be violated, or this Precept which prohibits such Burnt-Offering. In this Enquiry another Text is offered, which requires that Persons so devoted, should not be redeemed, but should surely be put to Death. The Reasons of such a Prohibition have with some Probability been assigned ; but whatever were the Grounds of it, such a Text there is in the Levitical Law. And even *Maimonides* understands it in this Sense, * tho’ he questions whether such Vows should not be confined to Heathen Slaves. However, ’tis plain, uncontrovertibly plain from the Course of the History, that *Jephthab*, either from this or some other Texts, thought himself obliged to the Performance of his Vow, and acted very sincerely herein, according to his own Persuasion. He did not do by Choice what he knew to be wrong, but against his own Inclination what he thought to be right. All those Interrogatories therefore, “ Would he

* *Tract. de Abst. & Anath. C. 6.* † *Pag. 3.*

“ act

“ act contrary to his Knowledge ? Could he live
 “ in Obedience to the Law, and yet dispense with
 “ the Breach of one Duty, which *Moses* had made
 “ indispensable ? or what an unjust Judge would he
 “ be, who should undertake to punish the Offences
 “ of others, whilst he himself was a notorious Of-
 “ fender ?” All these Enquiries, I say, are abso-
 lutely foreign to the Purpose, founded on an entire
 Misrepresentation of the Case, and proceed upon a
 Supposition, which is contradicted by the plainest
 Part of the History. *Jephthah*, so far from being
 a wilful Offender, lamented that he could not ex-
 cuse himself from the Performance of his Vow, and
 with the utmost Regret and Reluctance proceeded
 to that which was most unacceptable to himself,
 only because he thought he could not fulfil his Du-
 ty without it. Whether this be thought a Misper-
 swasion or not, yet it clears him at least from all
 voluntary Transgression; and that his Judgment here-
 in was really ill founded, is not so easy to prove. It
 is allowed, however, that these Circumstances rather
 prove, that he *ought* not to have done it, than that
 he *did* it not. He proposes now to rise higher, and
 observes,

Secondly *, that when we consider further, that
 “ the same Spirit of the Lord was upon *Jephthah*
 “ at the making his Vow, as was upon *Moses* at the
 “ writing of the Law, this clearly proves that he
 “ did it not.” This has been already answered.
 It is not said that the Spirit of the Lord was upon
 him at the Making of his Vow, but at his speedy
 Motions on opening the Campaign ; and some, as I
 before observed, suppose that he did not make this
 Vow, till some Time after in the Heat of the Battle.
 But suppose him under the Influence of this Spirit,
 during the whole military Service, would it follow,

that therefore he could not do one rash or wrong Action during that Period? Did the Spirit act irresistibly, and not only offer a co-operating Assistance, but take away the Liberty of his own Motions? Let us, however, examine the Reasonings on this Point: "The Spirit of the Lord," says he, "could not give one Law by *Moses*, and another "opposite to it by *Jephthab*.—He could not, whilst "the first was still in Force, direct any Person to "transgress it,—the infallible Spirit cannot contradict itself,—nor can human Sacrifices be both "lawful and unlawful at the same Time." Unquestionably true so far. Now then for the Inference, "So that if the same Spirit which spake in *Moses* "directed *Jephthab* (as the Text expressly says he "did) in making his Vow, then no doubt he did "not sacrifice his Daughter." But as the Text expressly says no such Thing, therefore all this Reasoning likewise is foreign, and concludes nothing to the Purpose. It is not so much as said, that the Spirit of the Lord was upon *Jephthab* when he made his Vow; and if it had been so said, this would not have justified us in saying, that the Spirit of the Lord directed him to make that Vow. A Man might be under the Influence of a mighty Spirit from the Lord, to work wonderful and courageous Exploits for the Benefit of his Country, and yet have no immediate Direction from thence for the forming of his own private Resolutions. The Holy Spirit exerts himself, and bestows his Gifts, not only in different Degrees but in various Kinds. To one is given by the Spirit the Word of Inspiration for the Instruction of Posterity; to another the Gift of Power and Valour by the same Spirit, for the present Service of his own Country. These, and many other distinct Effects *worketh one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally as he will.*

We

We cannot therefore, from the general Expression of any one's having the Spirit, conclude that he had all the same Powers and Effects, which another was favoured with by the same Spirit, when the Apostle does so expressly remark the contrary in his Observation on the great Distinction of spiritual Gifts. It does not follow, that because *Moses* had the Spirit of God to enable him to dictate Laws, and to record them for national and perpetual Instruction, therefore the Spirit that was upon *Jephthab* must be for the same End, to dictate to him by immediate Inspiration, and to keep him from every Kind of Error. No. The one was designed by the Spirit for a Lawgiver, and the other for a Commander, and the Effects of the Spirit in each were suitable to their respective Functions. This Gentleman himself has rightly observed in another Place *, that "the Lord raised up *Jephthab* to be their Deliverer, "and as it was common in such Cases, during the "Æra of the Judges, *the Spirit of the Lord came* "upon him, to enable him to execute his Office." His Office therefore was not that of a Prophet, but a General, and the spiritual Gift bestowed on him to that End, was not Infallibility in Religious Matters, but Skill and Courage in Military ones; and in this Sense the Spirit of the Lord might be upon him at the Time he made his Vow, and yet his Vow itself might not proceed from the immediate Direction of the Spirit. Other Instances were before assigned, of Persons of whom as much as this is said, whose whole Conduct yet was not unexceptionable †, but there is a further positive Evidence,

* Pag. 9.

† Similiter scriptura dicit, Spiritus Domini confortavit Gideon, & tamen ejus factum quod de illo auro prædæ operatus est Ephud, non solum laudare non possumus, verum etiam reprobare minime dubitamus, nec tamen ex hoc ulla sit injuria Spiritui Domini qui eum confortavit, ut Hostes Populi ejus tantâ facilitate superaret. *Augustin. Quæst. in Jud. lib. 7.*

that.

that this Vow of *Jephthab* was not from the Suggestion of the Holy Spirit. Whatever was the real Meaning of it, it was such as he earnestly repented of, and heavily lamented at the Sight of his Daughter. Whatever Construction we put upon it, it plainly proved a rash unhappy Engagement, and such as he would now have given all the Honour and personal Fruits of his Victory, to have reversed, if it had been possible. But now the Spirit of God is as well a Spirit of Prudence as of Piety, could no more have dictated an improper than a wicked Vow, and therefore could not by immediate Inspiration have suggested an Engagement, which according to every Interpretation apparently ended in his own Distress, and the Ruin of his Family. Had *Jephthab* known he had acted herein by divine Inspiration, he could not, he would not have bewailed with such passionate Exclamations, that he was brought very low by the Issue of his Vow, but would, according to his religious Character, have acquiesced therein with the same Resignation as *Abraham* did on a like Occasion. Some of the Primitive Christians, who made no Doubt of the Fact, and were at a Loss to reconcile it with the Character of *Jephthab* upon common Principles, put it as a possible Supposition, that it might be like the Case of *Abraham*, by divine Direction, to signify typically the future Redemption of the World by Means of a Sacrifice. They too well understood the Style of the sacred Writings, to insist from the Expression of *the Spirit being upon him*, that this was actually the Case, but only offered it as a Conjecture, to which St. *Augustine* replies with great Sufficiency *; and the unfortunate Event, according to every Construction, the Rashness and Impropriety of the Vow, whatever Interpretation we embrace, is sufficient to shew, that

* Ibid.

it came from another Original, even from his own unguarded Motion.

The *third* Objection is more extraordinary †, “ Supposing he had offered her up, and pretended “ to be directed by the Spirit of God, yet how “ came it to pass, that he was never punished ?” The plain Answer is, he never made any such Pretence, nay he expressly disclaimed any such Notion, by lamenting it as a wrong unhappy Vow. But if he had really had such an immediate Direction as this Gentleman contends in the preceding Paragraph, then the Action would have been to be considered in a very different Light, and that which would otherwise have been unlawful in itself in a private Person, would have been sufficiently justifiable by such an express immediate Warrant from the Giver of Life and Governor of the Universe, as in the Case of *Abraham*. Supposing therefore that *Jephthah* really offered up his Daughter, and pretended to be directed by the Spirit of God, we may easily account for it, why he was not punished, because he ought not to be, this divine Direction being an unanswerable Justification, and it is allowed by the Objector, that it was not a Pretence only. But to give a Meaning to the Objection, and put the Direction of the Spirit out of the Question, why was not he punished for offering up his Daughter ?” To offer human Sacrifices was made a Capital Crime by the Law, and yet, “ it is not so much as hinted, “ that he suffered Death for what he did ; nay, “ where does it appear, that he was ever called to “ an Account for it ?” Let us try the same Argument in another Case. Idolatry was made Capital by the Law ; and therefore, tho’ the Scripture seems indeed expressly to charge it upon several of their Princes and Governors, yet it could not be true,

because we do not find, that they were punished for it. For who had Authority to inflict Punishment upon them? Had the People Power to call their Superiors to Account? No, certainly. Passive Obedience was unquestionably a Doctrine of the Law, where Governors were more expressly the Appointment of Heaven, either by an immediate divine Designation, or by the Testimony of the Spirit seconding the Choice of the People. But, says this Gentleman, "There was something so particular in the *Offence*, in the Person of the *Offender*, and in the Time *when* he offended, that then the *Jewish State* ought not to have overlooked it." From *ought* not to *did* not, is a very remote Inference, tho' we should grant all the Premises; but tho' I very readily allow, that there was something particular in all these Circumstances here mentioned, yet it was such, as I shall shew, as will destroy any Notion of his suffering Punishment for the Fact. What is particular in the *Offence* is, that it was no wilful Offence in him, but such as was founded on his own sincere Persuasion, that he was obliged to execute it. Aggravate the Notion of a human Sacrifice as much and as justly as you will, 'tis plain he thought it a less Evil than Perjury, and was of Opinion, that no Plea could absolve him from the Performance of his Vow. *I have opened my Mouth unto the Lord and I cannot go back*, was his Argument; and if we think his Conscience was mildirected herein, yet since he acted faithfully according to it, the heaviest Imputation we can lay upon it is, that it was a rash Action of a mistaken, tho' well meaning Man. If this has often been repeated, the Repetition of such Arguments, which suppose the contrary, has made it necessary. There is not an Objection that this Gentleman has urged, which does not imply *Jephthah's* being wilfully

guilty of a known horrid scandalous Crime, whereas the Scripture represents him in the greatest Distress on the Occasion, afflicting himself heavily to find his Duty inconsistent, as he thought at least, with the Preservation of his Daughter, and persisting finally in his Resolution to fulfil what he esteemed his indispensable Obligation, tho' at the Expence of that which was the greatest Comfort of his present Life. It is an unaccountable Disregard to this Representation of the sacred History, to proceed in a Series of Arguments, which are founded on the contrary Supposition, and to call for Vengeance on a poor unhappy Man, who had already sufficiently distressed himself to fulfil what he thought his bounden Duty. It had been hard Measure indeed, to have punished himself so severely as he did, to fulfil his Vow, and then to have fallen under publick Punishment from others, for having acted according to his Conscience at the Expence of his own Comfort and his Daughter's Life. But "there was something particular" likewise in the Person of the Offender." There was so, if he must still be stiled such; for he was by original Contract, confirmed by the Gift of the Spirit, their Head and Governor, and therefore not liable to be controuled or punished by the People. The High Priest and great Council had indeed the Cognizance of ecclesiastical Matters, but had no coercive Power over the Person of their Judge. "There was farther something particular in the" Time *when* he offended." This again may be allowed, for it was a Time of great and general Corruption, as the Scripture expressly tells us, when there was little Disposition in the People, if they had had the Power, to have exerted themselves in the Cause of Virtue, and to have punished the supposed Misconduct of their General and Governor.—The next Argument under this Head rises still higher.

" God

“ God who then presided over the Jewish State, was
 “ in Equity bound not to spare such an Offender.”
 This again supposes, contrary to plain Evidence,
 that he was a wilful presumptuous Offender, and it
 is in itself a dangerous, and to speak the softest, a very
 unguarded Principle. God Almighty is not bound
 by our Opinions, but has wise and gracious Ends
 to serve by every Dispensation, whether we discern
 them or not. To argue against Fact in any Case,
 is to make ourselves wiser than him who made us,
 in whose all-comprehensive View every Part bears
 some Relation to the whole, and may be equirable
 in that Light, which our narrow Capacities cannot
 judge of ; however, in this and such like Cases the
 Belief of a future State puts an End to all Appearance
 of Difficulty, and would solve much greater Ex-
 ceptions. It is true indeed, that in the Time we
 are speaking of, their Duty was enforced by tem-
 poral Rewards and Punishments, by Promises of
 of Prosperity and Success upon Obedience, and of
 immediate Vengeance upon Transgression. But
 this held invariably only in their national, not always
 in their personal Capacity. The Jewish State ever
 flourished in Proportion to their publick Virtues,
 prospered in their Discharge of their Duty to God
 and to each other, and as soon declined upon the
 Progress of Idolatry and Immorality. But even
 here particular Persons, though wicked, enjoyed
 the Benefit of the publick Prosperity, and others
 who were themselves righteous, suffered in the com-
 mon Calamity ; nor could it be otherwise in the
 Cases of Famine, Pestilence and Captivity, without
 a continued Series of Miracles. An exact Distribu-
 tion of Rewards and Penalties according to the
 Merits of each single Person, was not observed
 even amongst them, and though Cases of Excep-
 tion were more rare with them than under any

Hy

other

other Dispensation, they were however frequent enough to raise the Observation of the inspired Writers, and to convince all thinking Men, if there had been no other Argument, of the Certainty of a future State. We cannot therefore infer, that though *Jephthab* had been guilty of the most heinous Offence, he must have been followed by immediate Vengeance from Heaven, or according to a bolder Expression, that "God was bound not to spare him," since he might make him the Instrument of his Providence in his merciful Designs towards others, and yet call him to a severe Account hereafter for his own personal Transgressions. Several of the succeeding Princes of *Israel*, who were Idolaters, died in Peace, which is a very convincing Proof of this Observation.—It may however be added, that a little Reading on this Subject might have prevented this Objection, since there was a Tradition amongst the *Jews* beforementioned, which several Authors have taken notice of, that he was really punished judicially by Heaven for this Transaction.

The next Objection advanced is, * that "the Nature of this Action was certainly immoral, and such therefore as *Jephthab* did not." This is little different, but in Words, from the first Objection, and the same Answer in Substance may be returned. It is allowed that it was immoral to offer a human Sacrifice, but it was immoral likewise to violate by Perjury a Promise solemnly made to God; and in this unhappy Dilemma, which a rash Vow had brought him into, he thought the former the less Evil of the two, and acted accordingly.—But here the Testimony of the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is introduced to prove that he could

* P. 5.

not be guilty of any such Action at all. A Commendation by an inspired Writer is thought to exclude any such possible Imputation. The Answer is easy, and has been before assigned, that a general good Character does not imply an Immunity from every single Fault or Error; and *Jephthab* might be numbred amongst the Worthies, who through Faith did Wonders for the Benefit of his Country, though he might be faulty in one Particular, as several others were, who are there joined with him.—But this Answer does not satisfy here. “For the most considerable Circumstance,” he says, “in the Life of this eminent Judge was the History before us. This was the most material Action recorded of him in Scripture, and which placed his Character in the most conspicuous Light. Now *St. Paul* could not form a Judgment of his Life and Character without considering this his principal Transaction;” and again, “the principal Point of View in which *St. Paul* considered him, that indeed, which gives us the strongest Proof of his Faith, was the making his Vow.”—But *St. Paul* says not a Word of this Matter, but only names him in a Catalogue of many Worthies, who had been the great Champions and successful Leaders of the Children of *Israel*. The principal Point, which introduced the Mention of *Jephthab* on this Occasion, was undoubtedly his Deliverance of his People from the *Ammonites*, his generous Undertaking, courageous Conducting and triumphant Concluding the War against that Nation. In the Progress and Consummation of that Undertaking, his Vow was only an incidental Circumstance, and had it been never so blameable, he might notwithstanding have deserved all the Applause that is here given him as a careful and faithful General.—But suppose farther, that the Vow had been the principal Point in View,

there was enough which was commendable even in that, to warrant the general Character, which is here given him as faithful. It was well meant, and intended as a religious Act to the Honour of God, however erroneous it might be in the Subject-Matter of it. And though I am very far from the Opinion, that a good Intention sets all Notions and Practices on a Level, yet we must allow it to be a Circumstance in itself of great Value, which recommends the mistaken Devotee to a great Degree of our Compassion and Tenderness. *St. Paul*, who had himself received Mercy, because what he had done wrong, was done ignorantly through Unbelief, knew how to distinguish betwixt the Nature of an Action in itself, and the Mind wherewith it was performed, and might well commend a sincere Regard to Religion, which will regulate the general Course of a Man's Life, though being misguided, it may betray him into some wrong Particulars. Now Rashness is a kind of temporary Ignorance; it blinds the Understanding for that Instant; and sometimes leads a good Man in his best Designs into unjustifiable Actions. *Jephthah* intended an extraordinary Testimony of his Gratitude and Thankfulness to his Maker for his Deliverance, which was so far commendable, whether the Instance in which he proposed to express it, will bear Examination or not. If he did not give himself Time to think on so weighty a Subject, he was undoubtedly guilty of Rashness; if he thought that Precept in *Lev.* would authorize him to devote one of his own Family, he mistook, as is generally supposed, the Intent of it; but on neither Supposition did he wilfully do a wrong Thing, but intended the Glory of God, the Governor of the Universe, and Protector of that particular People.—Farther yet, suppose the making of the Vow never so inexcusable, the Execution of it was a very

distinct and a very principal Point. * And on this Account, as I before observed, some of the Fathers did believe that St. *Paul* celebrated him for this very Particular. For what could be a stronger Instance or Proof of his Fidelity, than Compliance with what he thought his Duty in such a Case as this? Any Person almost but *Jephthab* would have found out some Excuse for the Non-performance of his Vow, especially where so much might plausibly be said, that the Reasons, which might have been pleaded for his Dispensation, are brought as positive Arguments against the Fact. But *Jephthab* thought his Duty to God was concerned, which is the first and great Commandment, and that any other, which unhappily seemed to interfere with it, must be disregarded; and on this Principle gave up all his present Comfort and future Hopes of Posterity, rather than be found disobedient to his Maker. No other such heroick Instance of Obedience is to be met with in History, except that of *Abraham* before mentioned; and though it is allowed, that he had an express Divine Direction for what he did, which *Jephthab* had not, yet since both thought themselves obliged to such a Sacrifice, they were according to their Perswasion equally praise-worthy in such a noble Instance of Resolution and Resignation. *Jephthab* pretended not to an immediate Revelation, but thought the Letter of the written Law (which contained an original Revelation) required it of him, and therefore sacrificed his own Peace and Joy, and his own innocent Offspring,

* Veruntamen etiam hic ejus Error habet aliquam Laudem Fidei, qua Deum timuit ut quod voverat, redderet, nec divini in se Judicii Sententiam declinavit, sive sperans Deum prohibitorium, sicut fecit Abraham, sive ejus voluntatem etiam non prohibentis intellectam facere potius quam contemnere statuens. *Augustin. ibid.*

rather than violate his Promise to his God. Nor is it undeserving of Observation, which has been remarked by others, that probably the History of *Abraham* might lessen the Horror of the Fact to him, which however, according to his own Notion, was binding on him; and his punctual Discharge of it, though so unacceptable and grievous to himself, was an eminent Proof of his Fidelity and Integrity.

The next Question intended as an Objection * is nothing more than a Presumption contrary to the plain Evidence of the Fact. "Can it be supposed but that *Jephthab* would word his Vow with so much Caution, as not to be obliged by it to do an immortal Action?" Whatever might have been supposed, before we had read the Scripture Account, it is plain he was not so cautious as he should have been, and such a Presumption in his Favour can be of no Force, when the History clearly assures us, that he did make such a Vow. The Immorality of it has been before considered: The Point is here put upon *Jephthab's* Caution. "There are still extant, we are told, Proofs enough of his great Abilities as well as Faith, which clearly evince that he was far from being either rash or weak, and yet he must have been both to a very great Degree, if he could first have vowed to have sacrificed his Daughter, or afterwards thought himself obliged to do it, because God had given him Success." Very decisive and peremptory.—As to *Jephthab's* Abilities, I am not disposed to question them; but that therefore he could not do a rash Thing, is a Consequence by no Means necessary, and which in this Case is disproved by every Interpretation of the Fact. Rashness, especially in a single Instance, is an Error sometimes incident to good Men—and even to wise ones too, and it may be difficult to assign a Character so un-

exceptionable as throughout a whole Life, to have no such Charge on it. But in this Instance 'tis plain that *Jephthab's* Vow, whatever it was, was rash, for he lived to lament it, which is Demonstration that it was not worded with so much Caution as is supposed. * As to his being "weak to a very great Degree, if he thought himself afterwards obliged to do it, because God had given him Success," I answer, he was not so weak as to determine the Question, by considering only one Side of it, without taking the least Notice of the other. I have so good a Notion of *Jephthab's* Abilities, that I am perswaded he knew much more than those, who are so ready to censure him; that he took into View the Difficulties on both Sides, the Immorality of the Sacrifice, and the Heinousness of Perjury, and formed his Judgment upon the greater supposed Malignity of the latter. Whether his Judgment be upon the whole to be approved or not, yet the Grounds of it were very strong in Appearance; and the Charge of Rashness and Weakness will fall on those who have omitted in their Account, those very material Considerations, which made this a Point of Casuistry, and induced this good Man to think himself obliged to fulfil his Vow, even by offering up his Daughter. It is added, "In either of these Respects he must have acted out of Character; in the first without his usual Prudence for which he is commended, in the latter without his Faith for which he is celebrated." The Commendation of his Faith has been already considered and explained, and shewn not to be inconsistent with the received Notion of

* Neque unquam adducar ut credam non incaute Principem promississe Jephthe, cum et ipsum Voti pœnituerit sui, postquam Filia occurrit sibi, *Ambros. de Officiis. Lib. III. c. 12. vol. II. P. 38.*

this Fact, but there is not the least Authority for the other Part of this Observation. I know of no Passage, where *Jephthab* is commended for his Prudence. He is said indeed to be a *mighty Man of Valour*, but Skill and Dexterity in military Affairs are something very distinct from Discretion and Caution in the Conduct of religious Vows. His Character was that of a good Warrior, and it was not acting out of that Character to fail in another Point, which related merely to Conscience: And though it is allowed farther, that he was a good, a sincere and religious Person, yet a single Instance of Rashness and Error, not of wilful Transgression, will by no means disprove that Character.

The concluding Objection is still the most extraordinary. “ * Whatever *Jephthab* was, yet God is perfect, and how shall we vindicate the Divine Perfections, if he gave Success to those Means, which led directly to an immoral End?” Why, we must vindicate them in the same manner, as in other Instances, wherein his Providence suffers Men not merely under an Error, but in designed Schemes of Wickedness, to triumph and prosper, and not presume to call the Success that he allows them, a *Countenancing* of their immoral Actions. If we will enter on such Subjects, it ought to be in the decent and humble Style of the Prophet *Jeremiah* xii. i. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I deal with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments; wherefore doth the Way of the Wicked prosper, wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?* The Fact, the Holy Prophet could not dispute, but proposes with Modesty to enquire into the Reasons of it. He did not take it for granted, that all Actions which were prospered, were therefore justified by the *Countenance* of God; he saw and knew the

contrary ; and though he seemed at first at a loss to account for it, he begs Leave to look into the Grounds of such a Dispensation. But under our superior Light, one would think this should be no Difficulty, and that we should not be at a Loss to vindicate the Divine Perfections, in giving Success to those Means, which are supposed to lead directly to an immoral End ; or to interpret that Success as an Approbation of those Means. There are many Instances in Sacred History, and many more in Prophane, of Persons, who have prospered in the midst of their Wickedness, and made their Immoralities instrumental to their Prosperity. And what Difficulty in all this, to those who believe a future State, where an equal Recompence will finally be assigned to all ? There are indeed other Considerations even of present Concernment, which take off much of the Weight of this Difficulty. The successful Event of War is rather a national than a personal Blessing, and a bad Man may in this Respect be made the Instrument of Prosperity to a righteous Nation. Again, these Events are only to be judged of by their final Conclusion, and a present Success often happens to be only the Path to more effectual Ruin in the End ; which was the principal Consideration, with which *Jeremiab* clears his Enquiry in the Conclusion of the forementioned Chapter : And it is observable to this Purpose, that though the People reaped the Benefit of the Deliverance wrought by *Jephthab* for them against the *Ammonites*, yet he himself was distressed by this very Success, and his rash Vow sufficiently punished by his Obligation to the Completion of it.—What is further offered in Illustration of this Objection coincides with some of the former Objections, and has been already answered. “ The Spirit of God was upon *Jephthab* when he made his

“ his Vow.” , In what Sense this is true, has been shewn before, but not as immediately inspiring and directing it, on which alone the Force of this Difficulty depends. — “ The Hand of God enabled “ him to succeed,” which is very readily allowed. — “ And it was this Success, which obliged him “ to perform his Vow.” This may likewise be admitted, though here urged, I suppose, only as *Argumentum ad Hominem*, and not as the real Opinion of the Objector. — “ In these Instances he was certainly under the Divine Guidance.” This I absolutely deny, in the First of these, which is the main Point of all, the contrary having been plainly proved, and therefore to the next Question I answer in the negative; “ Was it of God that he vowed to sacrifice his Daughter?” No it was not. It was a rash inconsiderate Vow, which most probably he never thought would reach his Daughter, and which, with Regard to any other Person, was at best questionable. But the other Part of the Interrogation requires more Distinction. “ Or could God in any “ Sense be the Means of such a Sacrifice? ’Tis oddly expressed, but in any Meaning of it may be readily answered. God might grant Success to *Jephtah* in his military Undertakings, notwithstanding he had vowed, that in Case of such Success he would offer up the first Person he met with. Lay the worst Imputation on such a Vow, the Fault was wholly in the Person who made it, and no way concerned the Conduct of Providence, which was not obliged to alter its intended Course of giving Victory to *Israel*, lest their Commander should think himself bound to offer a human Sacrifice. God was no more *the Means of such a Sacrifice*, than of any other Event, which he does not think fit to prevent by a particular Interposition. He overrules the Follies, the Faults, and even Vices of Mankind

Mankind to serve his own wise Designs, and is not bound, if they engage in wrong Pursuits, to change his intended Scheme, to prevent their Completion of them. The Case was plainly this—God had raised up *Jephthab* to be a Deliverer of his People, designing by him to give Victory to his People, in Pursuit whereof he enters voluntarily into this Engagement on Condition of Success, which some think was wicked, others rash and inconsiderate, whilst there are not wanting, who are of Opinion, that it was excuseable at least, if not justifiable in his Situation, from a particular Precept which has been mentioned. But whatever Interpretation is put upon it, was God obliged to alter his Design, desert his People, and suffer them to be defeated, lest he should be thought accessory to a wrong Engagement of their Governor? or was the Success he afforded a Testimony of his Approbation of every Step that was taken in it? It may as well be argued to countenance all the Practices of those *vain Men*, which the Beginning of the Chapter tells us, were joined to *Jephthab*, as to countenance his Vow, since all partook of the Benefit of the Victory over the *Ammonites*—But “it was this Success which obliged him to perform the Vow.” ’Tis true this Event was the Condition on which he had promised to offer up the first Person who met him, but did this therefore authorize his doing so, or shew the Divine Approbation of it? His Victory, considered in itself, obliged him to no such Return. If it was now at all binding, it was merely by virtue of such a Vow, which must bear all the Blame and Censure of it, and not a Providential Event, which was designed for other Purposes. Unless therefore the Counsels of Heaven are to be changed by the vain Purposes of Men; unless God is bound to provide, by a particular Interposition, that Vows which
are

are wrong in the Beginning, may not become binding in the End, (in which Case St. Paul ought to have been delivered into the Hands of the Jews, who had sworn his Death, that they might not think themselves obliged to destroy themselves by Abstinence) we cannot infer the Divine Approbation of his religious Engagement from the Event of his military Conduct; or that God did countenance Jephthah's Vow by giving him Success, especially when that very Success, as before observed, led him to the greatest Distress and Affliction.

These are the Arguments which were selected, it seems, out of many, to shew that the Account commonly given is not rational, &c. I apprehend it will appear from this Examination of them, that the Account commonly given, either was not known, or not justly represented; and that it may yet stand, notwithstanding all that is here advanced against it. The next Step is still more considerable, to "prove" from the History itself that he did not sacrifice "his Daughter."

I might, in Answer to what is suggested under this Head, refer to the foregoing Remarks on the History in which all these Exceptions have been obviated; but I shall very briefly review them, because they are styled, "Sound Arguments, and such as the Author trusts will appear satisfactory to every one."

The first* is taken from the Silence of the History, which would be sufficiently convincing, if it could be proved. But it is hardly possible to use more express Words than are used in the History upon this Occasion. *He did with her according to his Vow*, and his Vow was, that *whatever he met should be the Lord's, and he would offer it up for a*

* P. 11.

Burnt-Offering. No, says Mr. R. The Vow was, “ *Eiiber* it should be the Lord’s, *or* he would offer it up for a Burnt-Offering.” Should we not now expect some good Authority for inserting the first disjunctive Particle, *eiiber*? Had the Vow been so expressed, this would have been a good Reason for rendering the Particle γ as a Disjunctive likewise. But there is no Pretence for any such Insertion. The Words are expressly, “ *It shall be the Lord’s,*” without any such Particle prefixed, that might be rendered *eiiber*. However, that which is here betwixt the Sentences, it is contended, signifies *or*, which makes the Sense of the Vow disjunctive.---That it may sometimes so signify, is allowed; that it usually does so, is denied; and that it cannot have this Signification here, has been shewn from the Context and the whole Course of the History, and may be particularly from what this Gentleman has offered to support the contrary. “ It is certain, says he, “ these two Things were distinct: Though every “ Thing sacrificed was dedicated to the Lord, yet “ every Thing dedicated to the Lord was not sacrificed.” Very true; and therefore there was particular Reason to use and understand this Particle as a Copulative, to express the particular Manner in which this Thing or Person was to be dedicated: *It shall be the Lord’s, AND I will offer it up*; which has a regular Connection and Meaning; whereas a Disjunctive spoils the Sense, and makes it signify, as before observed, *it shall be holy, or it shall be holy*; for Sacrifice, he allows, was one Method of Dedication. This is therefore a plain Reason for varying from his other Assertion, that “ no one can object “ to this Particle being interpreted *or* in this Place, “ where the whole History fixes it to this Sense;” whereas I object to it for these Reasons, that the whole History, in all its Circumstances, fixes it otherwise;

wise; that it is an unusual Sense of the Word itself; that it renders the Sense of the Vow incoherent and inconsistent; and that all Translators have unanimously understood it otherwise, such as the *Greek, Latin, Italian, French*, and all the several oriental Versions.

The second Objection under this Head * is nothing more than a Repetition of the Unlawfulness of the Fact, with a Reference to the Law in *Lev. xxvii.* which prescribed a Ransom in such a Case, which is recommended to be carefully considered. I have examined it with Care, and find it relates to those who were vowed as a living Service to the Uses of the Temple or the Priests; which Service was to be commuted for a valuable Consideration; whereas, by a particular Law in the very same Chapter, those who were devoted, or vowed to Destruction as in Sacrifice, were not to be redeemed, but were surely to be put to Death; which, in Return, I recommend to be carefully considered.

The third Observation sounds as more material. He proposes to shew†, that “She was alive after her Father had fulfilled his Vow,” which would be much to the Purpose. But the Proof is, that it is said, *that her Father did with her according to his Vow. And she knew no Man.* “But when? says he, After she was sacrificed? No. This Remark would have been absurd, when she was “dead.” Most certainly. So absurd that no one would have thought of it. But at the Time of her Death the Remark was very proper and just, as an Aggravation of the Distress, that she departed out of Life a Virgin. This was the Circumstance she had bewailed, and her Lamentation was not false or hypocritical. There is no Intimation of her remaining a Virgin after the Completion of her Father’s

* P. 13.

† P. 15.

Vow. This Particle at least is copulative, and makes the Sentence entire. *Her Father did with her according to his Vow. And she knew no Man:* that is, he sacrificed her, whilst she was still a Virgin. Those significant Enquiries therefore --- “ Can any thing be more plain or self-evident, than that she who *remained a Virgin*, was also alive? “ Could she with any Propriety be said to be the one, without being the other? &c.” depend on a Point, which remains still to be proved, and for which there is not the least Foundation or Intimation in the Text alledged.

The two remaining Observations may be considered together, being so closely allied*, that “ the Daughters of *Israel* went yearly to make her Visits and Presents, and that she received them;” from whence it is strongly inferred, that she must then be living. But this again is taking for granted the very Point to be proved, by putting arbitrarily a new Sense on the Word, in Opposition to all preceding Writers, whether they favoured the Notion of a Sacrifice or not. We are first told, that the Word may signify to *make Presents*, and then we are positively assured, that this is the Signification of the Word in this Place, which is one of those sound Arguments, which is to appear satisfactory to every one. I have before remarked on this Assertion, and produced the Authority of Mr. *Leigh* against it, whose Opinion in the Case of *Jephthah* would have led him to have espoused this Sense of the Word, if he had thought it would bear it. But he observes in this Instance, what is often to be observed in others, that the Conjugation varies the Sense, and that as it is here used in *Pibel*, it most properly signifies, as the LXX. render it, to *lament*, though it may

* P. 16, 17.

likewise mean to *discourse*, but admits of no other Sense.---The only Appearance of an Argument here produced, is, that “ the Particle following the “ Verb does denote the Dative Case, *to*, and not “ that only, but frequently expresses something farther, &c.” This again is expressly contradicted by *Grotius*, to whom I before referred ; and his Testimony herein is of the most Weight, because he was one of the principal and most acute Opposers of the received Notion.---The plain Answer is, That a possible Sense of the Word is not to be received against a fixed and established one, without plain Necessity, much more when the other stands confirmed by every Version yet extant, and the united Testimonies of Friends and Enemies to the main Point disputed. The Vows of *Agamemnon* and *Idomeneus* are then mentioned by Way of Illustration*, and he says, “ ’Tis likely the Tradition of her being saved was “ the Foundation of their History being so represented.” I have before shewn that Tradition lay directly the other Way, and that it must indeed do so, because the History is express for the Completion of it. Either therefore *Jephthab* meant originally to vow a human Sacrifice, or he did not: If he did not, their Histories could not be derived from his, but were entirely different and distinct: If he did, the Consequence is certain, that she was sacrificed ; for the Text is express, that *he did with her according to his Vow*.

It is added, “ What tends strongly to confirm “ the Opinion that these Histories were derived “ from *Jephthab*’s Vow, is an Instance of the same “ Sort of Presents being offered to certain Recluses “ in the Heathen World, and it will be very difficult to assign any satisfactory Reasons for the Ori-

* P. 19.

“gin of such a Ceremony, unless we trace it up to
 “the Days of *Jephthab*.” I should think, on the
 contrary, that it would be the first Thing, which
 Compassion and natural Tenderneſs to Perſons in
 ſuch a Situation would ſuggeſt. We ſhould of
 courſe deſire to contribute ſomething to the Comfort
 of thoſe who were under ſuch an unnatural Confinement,
 and to ſweeten and alleviate, as far as we are
 able, by ſuch kinds of Offerings, the Inconvenience
 and Diſtreſſes of a recluſe Life, whereby they are
 diſabled from aſſiſting themſelves. This is a much
 more eaſy and probable Account of ſuch a Cuſtom,
 than by deducing it from the Imitation of ſo early a
 ſuppoſed Inſtance: for that the Practice of dedicating
 Recluſes ſhould, as this Gentleman thinks it
 muſt, have had its Original from hence; that Hea-
 thens ſhould derive this Cuſtom from *Jephthab*,
 and the *Jews* his own People ſhould never in a ſingle
 Inſtance copy after it, appears to me utterly unac-
 countable.

Having thus repreſented and examined all the
 Objections which have been offered by different
 Perſons againſt the Notion of *Jephthab*'s Sacrifice of
 his Daughter, I am now in my Turn to ſhew what
 Objections the other Opinion is liable to, beſides the
 poſitive Proofs which have been brought in Support
 of this.

Thoſe then who are unwilling to ſuppoſe that
Jephthab really offered up his Daughter as a Burnt-
 Offering, have taken Occaſion from the Mention of
 her *bewailing her Virginity*, to interpret the Vow to
 this only Meaning, and to conclude that ſhe was de-
 dicated to the Lord as a Virgin, and ſo continued a
 Recluſe all the Remainder of her Life. The firſt
 Queſtion then reſulting from hence naturally would
 be, Was then a Virgin-ſtate holy unto the Lord?
 Was this a more ſanctified Condition than that of

lawful Matrimony? The Members of the *Romish* Church would, we know, readily answer in the affirmative, which was the very Reason why they so greedily embraced this Opinion as soon as it was started by some singular *Rabbies*. But I am not at present arguing against them, who have an Interest to serve in the Determination of the present Subject, but against some learned Protestants, who avow the same Notion as we do, of a single State, however inconsistent with their Opinion of *Jephthah's* dedicating his Daughter to it. It is not necessary therefore here to go through the Controversy concerning Celibacy. Whatever some have seriously maintained concerning the superior Excellency of a Virgin-state, or others have ludicrously inferred from some Passages in *St. Paul's* Epistles, yet we may observe, that if the Proof of it drawn from the evangelical Writers was more clear and decisive, still this would not affect the State of the Question under the Law, where the Notion was certainly different;—and we may observe farther, that what *St. Paul* had advanced on this Subject is expressly distinguished to be only his own private Opinion, and not the Doctrine of the Gospel,—and likewise that even this Opinion of his was occasional, owing to the peculiar Exigence, of that Season, and expressly declared to be so by himself. He only says, *It is good for the present Distress so to be*. It was not a Time, when Persecutions were raised, and the Profession of their Religion was as much as their Lives were worth, to enter into those Engagements, which would set a higher Value on the Blessings of Life, and by encreasing and improving their Satisfactions, might the rather tempt them to preserve them at the Expence of their Conscience; and every wise and good Man would, I think, in the same Situation be of the same Opinion, though the Foundation of it concludes indeed

to the Honour of the Matrimonial State. However, this Point need not here be disputed; the Testimony of the Gentleman last mentioned, is very full to the Purpose. "The Practice of dedicating Recluses," he says*, could not come into the World from "Reason --- it was unreasonable --- not from Nature --- it was unnatural." According to his own Account therefore the Method in which *Jephthah* dedicated his Daughter was unreasonable and unnatural, which is something like a material Objection. He could say no more than this of a Sacrifice; but one may say more of this supposed State of Celibacy. A Sacrifice, it is allowed, was one Method of Dedication, however culpable it might be in the Subject-Matter of it; but a State of Virginity was not in any Respect a Form of being holy unto the Lord. It was not so in itself, neither was it so in the Opinion of the *Jews*. Observe then — *Jephthah* vowed, that *whatever*; or *whomsoever* he first met, *should be the Lord's*, that is, as is allowed, should be dedicated in some peculiar Method to the more immediate Service of God; and hereupon, say they, he dedicated his Daughter, who proved to be the Person, to a State of perpetual Virginity, which by their own Acknowledgment had no Relation to the immediate Service of God, nor included any Notion of Holiness either absolute or relative in it. According to this Interpretation then he did not fulfil his Vow, for he promised it should be holy unto the Lord, and only put her in such a State of Life as confessedly was not so, neither in the Nature of the Thing itself, nor in his own Notion of it. This is not therefore a different Meaning of the Vow, liable indeed to some Difficulties, but it is absolutely no Meaning of the Vow at all. There was no such Notion at that

* P. 20.

Time of the Holiness of a single State ; there was no Foundation in the Law for any such Opinion ; nor did any such in Fact prevail thro' Error amongst them. On the contrary, a single Life was, we know, in Disesteem amongst them. They had a higher Notion of the Sanctity of honourable Marriage, which might give them some Hopes of being related to their wished-for Messiah. Their Law encouraged this Sentiment. Children were promised as a Blessing. Barrenness was numbered among the Curses, which they were to be delivered from upon Obedience ; and it is very remarkable, that when People of all other Religions, true or false, when *Christians*, *Mahometans*, and *Pagans*, have given in to the Notion of a peculiar Holiness in a State of perpetual Virginity, the *Jews* alone have ever been of a different Opinion, and even think themselves obliged by Virtue of their Law to marry at a very early Age. The more inconsistent was it in those of that Nation, who first put this Interpretation upon *Jephthah's* Vow, and suppose that he fulfilled his Engagement of making his Daughter holy unto the Lord by an unnatural Confinement, which themselves esteem much otherwise than holy. Dr. *Waterland* seemed so sensible of this, that there was no peculiar Holiness merely in a State of Celibacy, that he is forced to add to the Notion, and to place the Holiness of her Dedication in the Exercises which were allotted to her therein. “ The Result, he “ says*, probably was, that she was to continue a “ Virgin all her Days, and to serve in such a Way “ as Females might, for the Use of the Sanctuary, “ as in Spinning, Weaving, making Vestments for “ the Priests and *Levites*, or in grinding Wheat, “ kneading Flower, baking Bread, and the like.

* Scripture vindicated, Part II. P. 85.

“ Such Kind of Services probably she was condemned to for Life. And thus the Vow was executed.” This latter Part, it must be confessed, looks somewhat like a Method of Dedication, and implies a Kind of relative Holiness: but why then is any Mention made of her bewailing her Virginity? All these Exercises might very consistently have been discharged in a married State. *Samuel* was dedicated whilst an Infant by his Parents, and continued in the Sacrifice of the Temple all his Life, yet married and had Children. *Sampson* was, by divine Designation, appointed for a *Nazarite* even before his Birth, yet contracted Matrimony, and no Imputation lies on his Wife as such, whatever there does on his Harlot. Had the Intent of the Vow therefore been to dedicate the first Person he met with to the Service of the Sanctuary, this might have been fulfilled without giving her any Cause to bewail her Virginity, there being not the least Connection betwixt such Services, and an Obligation to continue unmarried. And therefore this very Circumstance which has given Occasion to Some to expound the Vow of a State of Celibacy, appears to me a very strong Confirmation of the other Interpretation. If she was devoted to Sacrifice, and this fell upon her, whilst she was yet unmarried, it was very natural and proper to observe this, and for her likewise to lament it. Upon this Supposition it was easy to account for it; whereas, if she had only been dedicated to the Service of the Sanctuary, and this had happened whilst she was yet a Virgin, there could have been no Occasion for such a Lamentation, for, as appears from other Instances, she might have married afterwards, as other Females did, who performed these Offices. Nor are there wanting several other Objections to this Construction. Dr. *Lightfoot* has crowded together many

ny in few Words, which he confesses were so weighty as to occasion an Alteration of his Mind in this Particular, and to convince him, upon Examination, of the Reality of a Sacrifice, notwithstanding all his former Prepossessions against it*. *Quid devota personæ faceret? Nazaræam juberat esse? Vovere sic poterat, sed perficere ad arbitrium personæ pertinebat. Sacrarer sanctuario? Sed fungi illic nullo munere licebat, siquidem Levita non esset. A mundi consortio illam amoveret? Poterat certe carcere coercere. Cæterum ut id ullo alio modo fieret, in Personæ illius erat Arbitrio. Pone conjugatarum Ancillarum aliquam, vel conjugatorum Famularum, vel propriam conjugem occurrisse primam, quid cuicunque horum fecerit? Idcirco dum has aliasque quas textus habet, circumstantias expendo, cum illis cogor sentire, qui existimant illum reverâ obtulisse filiam, quamvis alias diversa mentis fuisse baud diffitear.* These Observations are very material, and contain an Answer to every possible Supposition concerning his Design of disposing of her.

For did he intend by his Vow to make her a *Nazarite*? This at most was only a temporary Separation according to the Law, was never otherwise but by special divine Appointment, and therefore could have no Relation to a State of perpetual Virginity; Dr. *Lightfoot* however chuses here to insist on another Consideration. He might vow this, he observes, if he pleased, but the Performance of it would still depend on her own Choice. Parents had no such Right to dispose of their Children this Way, or to oblige them to a single Life; but whatever they might vow, the Consent of the others was necessary to confirm such an Engagement. Mr. *Hewel* indeed mentions this, but says†, that “this Objection mi-

* *Lightfoot's* Chronic. Temp. & Ord. Text, Vol. I. P. 51.

† *Hist. of the Bible*, Vol. I. Book iii. P. 324.

"litates more against the other Opinion," and seems inclined in the End to question whether Fathers had not such a Right, though it amounts only at last to Advice in such a Case, which by his own Confession was not binding without their Concurrence. If Parents had indeed had such an absolute Power over their own Children, this, as was at first observed, would much lessen our Astonishment, and his Guilt in devoting his Daughter to Sacrifice; and as to the Degrees of Injustice in the one Case or the other, this makes little Difference, if we suppose him to act arbitrarily and unjustly at all. One would not expect to have such a Solution brought to clear up the supposed Difficulties of this Scheme, as was itself liable to the same Charge of Unlawfulness and Injustice, even though in a lower Degree. But there is yet farther a very considerable Difference in these two Cases to the Disadvantage of the new Interpretation. In vowing a Daughter to any such Situation, her own Consent was necessary by the express Letter of the *Jewish* Law, but no such Reserve was made in her Favour in the other Instance of being devoted to Destruction; and therefore when her Father tells her at once, that his Vow was irreversibile, it is a strong Presumption that it was this very Case, which did not require her After-concurrence to render it valid, but admitted of no Repeal.

Again as Dr. *Lightfoot* observes, if he intended to consecrate her to the Service of the Sanctuary, their Tribe was an insuperable Objection. None but *Levites* were admitted to this Honour; whereas *Jephthab*, being a *Gileadite*, must be of the Tribe of *Reuben* or *Gad*, of which Tribe *Moses* spake nothing concerning Attendance at the Altar. This was another Ground of the Unlawfulness of the Vow in this Sense, at least of the Execution of it, which I shall specify again more particularly presently.

Did he intend then to remove her from all Commerce with the World? It would be difficult to shew, how she would thereby become more particularly *the Lord's*. Her Father might indeed confine her in perpetual Imprisonment, if there was any Holiness in that, but the real Exercise of any Acts of Piety and Goodness, even there, must still depend on her own good Disposition and Regard to the Service of her Maker.

Again, if this was the Meaning of his Vow, What would he have done, if one of his married Servants had happened first to have come forth to meet him? The Separation of Persons joined together in lawful Matrimony could never have been thought a holy and religious Act; or if it had, the Virgin-state at least is out of the Question.

These Exceptions are strong, and others I think may be added. Most of those Offices assigned by the learned Author before-mentioned, as the probable Exercises of her State of Separation, and which could only in any Sense make it *holy unto the Lord*, do imply some kind of Society, and could not be discharged by a Person entirely solitary. Now it is not pretended, that there was a Society of holy Nuns set apart with her for joint Devotion; but those who have supposed that the Daughters of *Israel* made her an annual Visit, have implied, that it was to bewail her close and solitary Confinement.

But the great Objection of all is, that had this been the Sense of his Vow, it could not, it must not have been fulfilled. This has been urged as an Argument against the other Interpretation, but was of much stronger Force against this. In the former Case there was an express Provision, that the Devoted Person should *not be redeemed, but should surely be put to Death*. But in this Instance all the Precepts which are referred to for the other about Redemption,

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on; were really applicable, and could not be evaded according to the Direction of their Law. For it is to be considered, that this was not merely a Permission, but a positive Injunction for redeeming such Persons. *If any Man made such a singular Vow, as it is expressed, Lev. xxvii. 2. the Persons were to be the Lords only by their Estimation*; that is, according to the Value, which the Priests should set upon them, after which follow the Rules for Estimation in all common Cases, with an Exception for particular Poverty, in which Case it was to be rated lower, that it might be redeemed: They being not allowed to serve personally, the publick Service of Religion being already sufficiently provided for and confined to a particular Tribe.—But as soon as the Law comes to treat of *Beasts* or *Lands*, which were vowed, then Mention is presently made of his Choice to redeem it, they being at Liberty, in these Instances, to redeem or not; which I observe to shew, that they were not so in the Case of human Persons. If *Jephthab* therefore, by a singular Vow, had dedicated his Daughter to the Service of God in religious Uses, he ought by this Law to have redeemed her. It was not in his Power, if it could have been in his Inclination, to have declined it. And the Reason given, even by wise Men, why so plain a Direction was not followed, to the Ease of the Father, the Deliverance of the Daughter, and the Satisfaction of the Letter and Intent of the Law, are so egregiously weak and trifling, that 'tis amazing that they should reject the other Interpretation on account of its Difficulties, and embrace this with such superior Exceptions to it. Dr. Wall's Solution is extraordinary. "One Thing," says he*, "is strange, that *Jephthab* did not take the Advantage of the Law, Lev. xxvii. 1. &c. (for there is no

* Critical Notes on the Old Test. Vol. I. P. 172.

“ Sign of her being devoted, or any Curse used)
 “ but perhaps the young Lady chose to perform
 “ the Vow in kind.” He seems then to allow,
 that had she been devoted, or a Curse used, no Re-
 demption could have been admitted, which is true ;
 and from all the following Circumstances, which
 are consistent upon this Supposition, it is more
 reasonable to conclude, that the Vow was of
 this devoting Kind, tho’ it is not expressly re-
 presented in the original Expression of *Jephthah’s*
 Vow, than to take it for granted, that it was not,
 and thereby to be involved in inextricable Diffi-
 culties concerning his Neglect of redeeming her.
 The Term by which the Vow is expressed is ge-
 neral, and may include any Subdivision, or particu-
 lar Species of Vows ; for tho’ it could not have been
 understood otherwise than as a Curse, if the Word
Cherem had been used, it may be so understood,
 tho’ it is not. The Sense of the Expression does not
 exclude it, the Mention of a Burnt-Offering implies
 it, and all the Consequences are such as confirm the
 Notion. It is not true therefore to say, “ there is
 “ no Sign of her being devoted,” but if it had, the
 Reason assigned, why she was not redeemed from
 the general Dedication is wonderful, that “ perhaps
 “ the young Lady chose to perform the Vow in
 “ Kind.” It is scarce possible by a Comment to
 represent the Absurdity of this more flagrantly than
 it appears at first Sight. It was not a Matter of
 Choice at all, the Law having directed the Method
 and Value of the Redemption ; but if it had, are
 not the bitter Lamentations of her Father, the known
 Reproach of Virginitv and Barrenness amongst the
Jews, her own Request of two Months to bewail
 her great Misfortune, and the annual Commemora-
 tion of the Calamity by the Daughters of *Israel* (in
 whatever Sense we interpret it ;) are not these De-
 monstrations

monstrations against this supposed Choice of *Jephtab's* Daughter? Dr. *Waterland's* Observation on this Difficulty *, which he says he borrows from *Le Clerc*, is, that "tho' *Jephtab* might by the *Levitical* Law have redeemed her even from this Servitude and single State, yet probably being a very religious Man, he was scrupulous in the Matter, having made his Vow in so solemn a Manner and on so publick an Occasion, and he might think it mean in a Person of his Distinction to redeem so precious a Treasure as an only Daughter, at the low legal Price of thirty Shekels." But there was not the least Foundation for the most religious Person to raise any Scruple in this Point, if he had only dedicated her to the Service of the Sanctuary. This Redemption was not a Violation or Evasion of his Vow, but the very Method which the Law had prescribed for the Completion of it. This was not going back, when he had opened his Mouth unto the Lord, but continuing to fulfil his Promise, according as the Lord had appointed. The Person so vowed was to be the Lord's by Estimation, not by personal Service, but by the Value which such supposed Service was worth. And as to the Smallness of the Estimation, since it was the legal Price, the Wisdom of their Lawgiver was a sufficient Justification from any Imputation of Meanness; nor would *Jephtab* have so distressed himself or confined his Daughter on such a Punctilio. Besides, it had been easy, if he had been so disposed, to have added to the Value on this Occasion, and to have contributed largely beyond what the Law required, to the Service of the Sanctuary, or the Support of some of his indigent Brethren.

But tho' the Meanness of the Ransom, and inconsiderable Value of the legal Estimation, be no

* Scripture Vind. Vol. II. P. 86.

Objection

Objection against his redeeming her, if that had really been the Meaning of his Vow, yet it is a strong Presumption against any such Meaning, that upon Occasion of so great an Exigence, he should enter into an Engagement so unsuitable, and should vow only the Value of *thirty Shekels* for the Deliverance of himself and his People. If he was so inconsiderate as to make a Vow, the Lawfulness of which he did not take Time to examine, or if he really thought, and thought that the forementioned Text in *Lev.* authorized him to *devote unto the Lord* any Thing of *all that he had, both of Man and Beast, &c.* then there is Sense in the Importance of the Engagement, and the Dignity of the Sacrifice proposed corresponded to the Weight of the Blessing petitioned: The Vow then bore a proper Analogy to the Occasion, and the Meaning of it was consistent, according to Bishop *Smalridge's* Paraphrase of it *. “ O Lord, by thy Command I now go forth against the Enemies of thy People. Do thou who art the Lord of Hosts go along with me, and give me Victory over thine and our Enemies. If thou shalt grant unto me this my humble and earnest Request, there is nothing so dear to me, the Loss of which I will not undergo ; to thee therefore I readily devote whatsoever cometh forth of the Doors of my House to meet me, when I return in Peace ; tho’ my only Daughter herself should be the Person who should happen to meet me upon so joyful an Occasion, that Daughter should be thine, and in Acknowledgment of so great a Mercy, should be offered unto thee for a Burnt-Offering.” This was a considerable Devotement indeed, and looked like the Promise of one whose All was depending ; but that he should say or mean, that if God would graciously at this Time preserve

* *Smalridge's Sermons*, P. 228.

him and the whole Nation of *Israel* from the imminent Danger threatening them by the *Ammonites*, his Daughter should; in Return for this great Blessing, live all her Life a Virgin (which was rather a less than a more holy State than others) and be dedicated to the Service of the Sanctuary (with which a Virginitate State had no Connection, and from which she was to be redeemed for thirty Shekels ;) this was entirely unfuitable and unaccountable, unworthy the very Pretence of Wisdom or Piety, and would have looked rather like Mockery than Devotion. Here the Plea of *Jephthah's* Abilities and good Inclinations is of real Weight, and such a trifling Vow had indeed been unworthy his Character in every other Instance.

Several other Exceptions to, and Difficulties in this Construction, were incidentally illustrated in the View of the History itself, which I shall not here repeat. I shall only add, that it is more than a witty Saying, it contains Sense and Solidity; as well as Smartness of Expression, which is observed by the principal Defender of the Lawfulness as well as the Reality of the Fact *, that on this new Supposition she need not have petitioned two Months Respite to bewail her Case, since she would have had more than Time enough to have bewailed that afterwards; but if she had requested such an Interval at all, it would have been to take some Pleasure with her Companions, whilst her Liberty lasted, before she entred on such a mournful State of Confinement.

* Si consecrata fuit Virgo perpetua, potuit toto Vitæ tempore deslere Virginitatem suam, imo tum demum illam flere oportuit, quum conclusa fuit Monasterio, priusquam vero Monasterio includeretur, debuit potius cum coetaneis Puellis spatio duorum illorum Mensium Vitam agere hilarem, siquidem Tempus postmodum plus satis longum ad lugendum conclusæ suppetebat. *Lud. Gessell. Notæ Crit. in Vet. Test. P. 423.*

I shall now, upon the whole, compare very briefly the two Interpretations.

The received Opinion has a plain Meaning, and gives us a proper Idea of the Devotion of a Vow in the Original and in the established Notion and Use of Sacrifices : The other Opinion of Celibacy has no such Meaning, no Relation to Devotion or peculiar Holiness, which could make it the Subject of a Vow, not in itself, nor in the Opinion of the *Jews* at that Time or ever since.—Again, the former, tho' charged as being irregular in the Matter of it, as contrary to the general Law of *Moses*, has yet great Authority to justify or excuse it, from a particular Law, which looks like an allowed Exception ; whereas the other is liable to the same Charge of Irregularity in her not being redeemed according to the exprefs Direction of the Law, without any Pretence of any other Text to reverse this Direction, or to account for the Neglect of it.—The former was suitable to the Exigence he was driven to, as being a Sacrifice, if it could be thought allowable at all, of high Value and Estimation : The latter, if there had been any Devotion in it at all, too inconsiderable to have been offered upon so interesting an Event.—According to the former, her Father's bitter Lamentations at the first Sight of her, her own solemn Method of bewailing her Case, and the after Commemorations of it by the Daughters of *Israel*, are all consistent with, and worthy of so heavy and so unusual a Misfortune. In the latter, they fall much beneath the supposed Event, which was neither so very grievous nor so uncommon, but was the Fate of many a Person besides herself.—The former is grounded on the literal and common Acceptation of the Expressions used : The latter has Recourse to Figures and Metaphors, to strained and remote Senses against every Version of the Original.—
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The former has the united Suffrage of all Ancients, both *Jews* and *Christians*, to support it: the latter, as far as appears, was not thought of for more than two thousand Years after the Fact it relates to.

I shall now offer some suitable Inferences from these foregoing Reflections.

And first I shall observe from hence, that nothing which has been here advanced will justify the Charge which has been brought against the *Mosaic Law*, as countenancing human Sacrifices. The Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation**, and *The Moral Philosopher*† as his second, have both urged this Objection from this very Argument; and this seems to have been the Consideration, which induced such great Men as Dr. *Jenkin*, Dr. *Waterland*, and Dr. *Leland*, to contradict the received Opinion, and overlook the Absurdities of the other. It was thought the shortest Answer to say, That the Fact was doubtful, and that Commentators were divided in their Opinion, whether *Jephthah* really sacrificed his Daughter or not. And I cannot conceive, that it could be any other Cause which induced the first Authors of the latter Construction to think of so peculiar a Thing as a Dedication to perpetual Virginity, which had not the least Foundation in Antiquity. Some loose *Gentiles* probably had reflected on this History of one of their principal Leaders*, and had retorted their Accusation of them for human Sacrifices upon their own Heads in the Instance of their victorious *Jephthah*. This led them to question the obvious literal Sense of the History, and to find

* P. 83.

† P. 131.

§ I have since the writing of this found this Conjecture confirmed by the Testimony of St. *Augustin*. *Quibusdam qui scripturis sanctis imperitâ impietate adversantur, hoc maxime in crimen vocantibus quod legis & prophetarum Deus etiam Humanis sacrificiis fuerit delectatus.* Quæst. in Jud. Lib. III.

out, if possible, some other Meaning for it, which ended at last in the unheard-of Notion of a State of Celibacy. But now the doubting or denying the Fact of his offering up his Daughter, is no satisfactory Answer to the Objection as usually urged, nay, it rather gives some Advantage to it, as implying that it would be of some Force, if it could be convincingly proved. Whereas the Fact itself proves nothing either Way as to the Lawfulness of the Action, but can at most reflect only on the Character of the Person who did it, in which the Authority or Purity of the *Jewish* Law is not concerned. If *Jephthab* sacrificed his Daughter, and had no Grounds in the Religion he professed to justify him in doing it, then he is to be condemned, and not his Religion; whereas if there be such a Precept in the Dispensation he lived under, which seemed to require such a Sacrifice, this may well be questionable, whether he acted according to it or not. Accordingly his History is only introduced as the Consequence of that Precept, which is expressly referred to, and it is thus urged by both the Infidel-Writers before-mentioned. The proper Question therefore is, not whether *Jephthab* sacrificed his Daughter or not, but whether that Law in *Levit. xxvii.* by which he is supposed to be influenced, if he did it, can be urged to countenance human Sacrifices. I have already so particularly considered this, that it would be sufficient to refer to it. It is not indeed necessary to insist on this Sense of the Precept, in order to ascertain the Reality of the Sacrifice in the fore-mentioned Case, since *Jephthab* might possibly mistake the Sense of it, and through Error be led to offer up his Daughter; but even if it be understood in that Meaning, no Argument can be drawn from thence to countenance human Sacrifices. The Objectors, if they would have argued pertinently and

rationally, should have insisted on the appearing Inconsistency between this Text and that in *Deut. xii. 31.* but to take no Notice of that, or to pass over it with a slight Remark, that Human Sacrifices were thereby prohibited to be offered to Idols or false Gods, but were here required to be offered to the True One, is unpardonable Partiality and Misrepresentation : for nothing can be plainer than that the Children of *Israel* by that Passage in *Deut.* were not only forbid to offer their Worship to any false Object, but particularly to express it in this their abominable Method of Human Sacrifices. *Take Heed to thyself,* says this Law, *that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou enquire not after their Gods, saying, How did these Nations serve their Gods, even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God : for every Abomination to the Lord which he hateth, have they done unto their Gods ; for even their Sons and their Daughters they have burnt in the Fire unto their Gods.* No Words can be more express to the Purpose, or more emphatical than those here used ; and if it be enquired how that Direction in *Levit.* against the Redemption of devoted Persons, which requires their certain Destruction, can be reconciled with this, it ought previously to be observed, that this is very clear, full, and decisive, whereas the Notion of devoting by *Cherem* there spoken of being to us at least obscure, has rendered the Meaning of that Text difficult and doubtful, and by all the Laws of Interpretation in the World, the plainest Rule is to be preferred to the dark and intricate. It is farther to be observed, that this Prohibition of human Sacrifices is general and absolute, whereas that Precept, which seems to allow of them, is only occasional, and has Reference to the particular Case of Vows, wherein when Men

had involved themselves, they were not to release themselves, but to put their Vow in Execution. It is to be observed therefore, that even this Law does not *direct*, no nor signify the *Approbation* of such Vows, but only requires, that when they were solemnly made, they should be punctually observed ; which might be even to prevent the numerous Evils attending rash Vows, and the frequent Violation of them, when they were found wrong or inconvenient. That it had such Effect in the extraordinary Lamentations and Commemorations that appeared in the Case of *Jephthah*, and in the entire Silence of the History concerning any like Instance in After-Times, is very remarkable ; and the Reasonableness and Equity of so severe a Law, which is supposed to be designed in *terrorem*, has been before illustrated and vindicated.

Secondly, I would observe from this and such like Points of Controversy about some Passages in the Old Testament, the great Advantage of living under the Direction of the New. The Light of the Gospel is not only an inestimable Blessing in delivering us from the Darkness of Heathenism, but even in freeing us from the Difficulties of the *Mosaick* Law, and is thus represented by the Sacred Writers themselves. The *Burden* of that Dispensation may be allowed, without Prejudice to the Wisdom or Goodness of its Author ; and that, not only in the Observance of its many Ceremonies, but in the Knowledge of the Foundation of some, even of its moral, much more of its civil Precepts. The very Design of their Separation, and the peculiar Circumstances of their Situation made several Injunctions reasonable, necessary, and morally fit for them, which would not have been proper for, or justifiable in, another People, who were in different Circumstances. In these there is great Room for Ignorance to object, and in many of them a Confession of our Ignorance would

be a competent Answer. We know not enough of them and of every Nation that surrounded them, to assign the Foundation of each particular Precept, nor always to determine whether it has Relation to their religious Improvement, or political Security. There was such an intimate *Alliance* betwixt their Church and State, that at this Distance of Time it is difficult to say in some Instances, whether *Moses* prescribed in the Capacity of a Lawgiver or a Prophet; whether he had their temporal or spiritual Interest in View. Some Things likewise were permitted to them *for the Hardness of their Hearts*, to prevent greater Inconveniencies, which are not applicable to, and would not be justifiable in, other People: And there are farther some Difficulties at this Distance of Time in judging of what they well understood, which were the general Rules, and which were the Exceptions. For Instance, what Controversies once filled this Western Part of the Christian Church, and what important Consequences followed upon a Difficulty, which was raised from a seeming Repugnance betwixt one Text in *Leviticus*, and another in *Deuteronomy*, concerning marrying the Brother's Widow? This was unquestionably founded on Reasons peculiar to the *Jewish* Dispensation, and is still, I think, one of the principal Difficulties in it; for, had the *Mosaick* Direction been out of the Question, certainly the Point had been easy to be determined from Reason or the Christian Revelation. But in all such Cases relating to the Actions of the *Jewish* Worthies, the Rule of their Actions, and the Grounds of that Rule, a little Learning may raise such Doubts as require a great deal distinctly to solve and explain. And tho' some Learned Men have lately laboured very successfully in clearing and vindicating many Parts of the *Jewish* Law, which were thought most exceptionable; yet it must, I think, be

allowed, that we still want Light in some Particulars, and probably shall ever continue to do so. But when we turn our View to the immediate Laws of our Religion, we can challenge Malice itself to affix any thing on them, which can look like an Exception. These are calculated for the Benefit of all Mankind in all Ages and Places, which the Weakest cannot misapprehend, nor the Wisest pretend to improve. They have been honoured by the Testimony even of Adversaries; for *the Moral Philosopher* pretends, however weakly, to embrace Christianity as a distinct Institution, on Account of its intrinsic Reasonableness and moral Fitness. And tho' this was no more than a Pretence, yet the internal Evidence of our Religion is really of great Weight to enforce the Belief of it. The meanest Capacity is, in this Part at least, capable of a rational Faith, and may judge of the Original of this Doctrine by its Purity and useful Tendency. These Laws are clearly and universally holy, and just and good, and worthy that Heaven from whence they claim their Descent. And tho' I am persuaded, that none of the *Jewish* Laws can be proved otherwise; yet, as some of them were local, national and occasional, their Piety, Purity and Use is not at so remote a Situation of Time and Place so self-evident as that of the Evangelical Precepts. Here no Imputation can be laid of any Contradiction to the Dictates of Humanity, or Notions of moral Virtue; but both are here so exalted and improved, that 'tis in vain for any to pretend to be Friends to Mankind, who are Enemies to the beneficial Doctrines of the Gospel. This is a Point scarce enough insisted on, and very evidently not enough valued; nay, its Advantages seem to be overlooked for the very Reason for which they are entitled to our higher Regard, because we have been
long

long in Possession of them. Those who were just got free from the Ignorance of Paganism, in moral as well as religious Duties, and from the Burden of *Judaism*, in Ceremonies as well as its Uncertainty in some casuistical Points, knew how to value the Blessing of the Gospel in its easy, clear and sublime Rules of Life. They rejoiced in their Deliverance from Doubt and Perplexity, and in their Discovery of so perfect and unexceptionable a Guide of Conduct. But we having, though the Mercy of God, been educated in the Christian Faith, and knowing only the happy Side of the Question, are not sufficiently sensible of the personal Disquiet and Misery of total Ignorance, or great Uncertainty in religious Matters, and the sad Effects of it in Society; and consequently do not sufficiently value or rejoice in the Light and Direction of our Holy Religion. This not only transcends all others, whether well or ill founded, in the Excellency of its Promises, but in the Purity of its Precepts; which are easy to be understood, and easy to be performed, are contributive to personal and social Welfare, and are even Temptations, if I may call them such, to Duty and Happiness.

Thirdly, This Example may shew us the Danger of rash Vows, and indeed of all such unprescribed and extraordinary Engagements. There is a strange Inclination in many Persons who mean well, to to be doing something more than their bounden Duty; and though the Advocates of the *Romish* Church only avow the Doctrine of Merit, yet others are aiming at the same Thing in Practice, who have not the Confidence to maintain the Principle. God forbid that one should discourage any Attempts towards a more exalted Piety, when even the moral regular Part of Mankind so much need to be awakened from their Indifference towards Religion,

which others with all Zeal and Earnestness are labouring to extirpate. But for that very Reason all such singular Vows are the rather to be avoided, because they involve those very Persons in great Difficulties, who mean the most seriously to discharge their Duty, and likewise give Occasion to the Enemies of their Profession to misrepresent and ridicule the good Principle from which they proceed. It usually happens that these singular Engagements are entered into at a Time of some extraordinary Difficulty and Emergency, when Men are least able to judge properly of the Nature and Consequences of them, and by Persons likewise of a Temper and Disposition the least proper to conduct and execute them. They are mistaken for Assistances to Virtue, when on the contrary they prove Snares to their Consciences, leave them in Perplexity greater than that which occasioned them, and scarce ever end but in Repentance. They are used by those who least need such extraordinary Helps, if they were such, but whose sincere Piety is much better established by the plain Rules of the Gospel. Persons who are indifferent about Religion, rarely trouble themselves with these Vows, but they who are most tenderly affected with a Sense of the Importance of their spiritual Concernments, are most liable to enter into such Engagements. The most Pious are therefore the most hurt by them; Those whose Judgments we should desire to be best settled, those to whom we should most heartily wish *good Luck in the Name of the Lord*, are most distracted and disturbed by these uncommanded Observances, which they had voluntarily bound themselves to. Then there is no greater Triumph to the Adversaries of all Religion, than what arises from these singular Contracts. *Jephthah* no doubt meant by his Vow an extraordinary

ordinary Testimony of his Piety towards God; yet by it we see he not only brought Distress on himself, and Ruin on his Family, but a standing Reproach, however unjust, on the Religion he professed. And the Case is usually the same in every like Instance. The Enemies of the Gospel are either not so discerning that they *can*, or not so honest that they *will*, distinguish betwixt the Piety and the Indiscretion of each private Devotee, but are ever ready to charge their rash Conduct to the Influence of their Religion, when that very Religion, if impartially appealed to, would itself condemn it. And I am perswaded, that whatever Allowances we must make to the good Intention of our modern Enthusiasts, their similar Follies and rash Extravagancies have done more Prejudice to true Christianity than the professed but weak Attempts of its most open Enemies, as having laid it open to Scorn and Contempt, to false Suggestions and groundless Imputations. Nothing but Misrepresentation can hurt the Cause of the Gospel, which in its native Purity and Simplicity will ever shine to the Confusion, if not the Conviction of its Opposers. But now none have more contributed to misrepresent, and consequently to injure it, than those who delight in these unprescribed Austerities, and who tie themselves to such Rules as destroy all Enjoyment or Comfort in themselves, and prevent their being of any Use or Service to the World. The Infidels rejoice in their Account of *Scriptural Christianity*, which they readily embrace on purpose to expose it to Ridicule, to shew that it cannot be founded on Reason, that it is not consistent with a regular Establishment, and that it is destructive of all Peace and Joy; in a Word, that it is impracticable
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and irrational. Thus their well-meant but ill-judged Discourses of a Perfection that is above the present State of human Nature and the present Condition of the World, have wrought an Effect which they themselves abhor, and they have, however undesignedly, been the Instruments of those, who have the worst Designs against the Gospel itself.—There is likewise a farther Danger in these voluntary Engagements even to such good and well-meaning Persons themselves: Those Vows which are laid on them by no Authority but their own, are sometimes without any other dispensed with, and the Breach of these solemn Resolutions by too easy a Casuistry, not only perplexes the Conscience, but opens the Way to the Violation of the most binding Duties. Every Forfeiture of the Promises made to God is not only dangerous in itself, but in its Progress, lessens the Force of all other the most indispensable Obligations, and is an unhappy but very natural Preparative to Transgression in other Instances. When the Fear of offending is once weakened by wilful a Offence, when Inconvenience or Inconsideration is once pleaded for setting aside solemn Engagements made to God, some like Plea is found for dispensing with other Ties, and 'tis more difficult to prevent a Repetition of Transgression than the first Act of it. Every voluntary premeditated Offence tends to harden the Conscience, and to lead to farther Acts and Kinds of Guilt; and accordingly it is sometimes so seen, that as a Reformation of Prophaneness, unless guided by great Discretion, is apt to deviate into Superstition, so on the other Hand, the most Superstitious, when made sensible of their Folly, are apt to decline both in Speculation and Practise into the Extreme of Irreligion. The great Preservative of true Piety and
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real Virtue is a rational Conduct of ourselves by the plain Rules of the Gospel, and not by any new ones of our own. There are no Intimations of any such kind of Engagements under the Christian Law; and even under the *Jewish*, their Directions were not Injunctions of the Practice, but rather Cautions concerning the Regulation of it.

Lastly, This History of *Jephthah* affords us a noble Pattern of an eminent Resolution at all Events of fulfilling what we believe to be our Duty. Whether his Persuasion was to be justified or not, yet he acted according to it, and in such an Instance as none but the most resigned Soul would have done it, had he been never so firmly persuaded of his Obligation to it. If the Rashness of his Vow then be a proper Caution against such Engagements, his sincere Discharge of his Conscience against so many and strong Temptations is likewise a proper Example for our Imitation. He gave up the greatest Blessing of his Life, rather than fail in what he thought his Duty to God, and shall we refuse to give up those Lusts and Passions, which are really the Enemies of our Welfare in the same important Cause? Our Rule of Life is more perfect, our Terms of Obedience more easy, and our Prospect of future Recompence, at least, more distinct and glorious than his. And under such accumulated Advantages shall we disgrace our better Dispensation, and ruin ourselves both here and hereafter, in Opposition to all the Principles of Reason, Duty and Interest? There must indeed be great Hypocrisy, or unaccountable Insensibility in those, who profess the Christian Faith, and yet live, I will not say unlike good *Jews*, but even good Heathens. One should imagine, either that they did not know what Articles their Profession contains, or that they

they never once in their Lives bestowed a single Reflection on the Importance of them. For is it possible, that a Man should see and reject the Offer of endless Happiness, that he should choose rather to undo himself for ever, and should calmly and designedly venture on the Prospect of eternal Ruin? Is it possible that he should choose this, when the very Terms of future Felicity proposed to him are farther shewn to be most in general for his present Advantage, and always infinitely preferable to any Refuge or Relief which Iniquity can offer? If the general Conduct of Mankind be astonishing upon this View, and can only be resolved into an absolute Inattention to the most important Concern of their Being, let us however give Life to these Motives by frequent Reflection, and even on one serious View of it enter on the World with an unalterable Resolution of fulfilling our Duty at all Events, despising the Littleness of all Temptations and Difficulties, which would allure or terrify us from it. Let us both adopt *Jephtah's* Principle, and as zealously imitate his Resolution in adhering to it, that where *we have opened our Mouth unto the Lord, we cannot, we will not go back.* We have solemnly professed his Religion, and undertaken his Service in our Baptism; No Power on Earth can absolve us from this Vow, or reconcile any wilful Iniquity with it. Let us then with Indignation reject the first Step or Proposal towards it; replying with the Spirit, and in the Language of *Joseph*, *How can I do this great Wickedness and sin against God?* Our Duty towards him is and ought to be our first Concern, and when that is secured, we may look with Indifference on all the other Events of the World. His Favour, in the usual Course of his Providence, will best provide us with the Comforts